

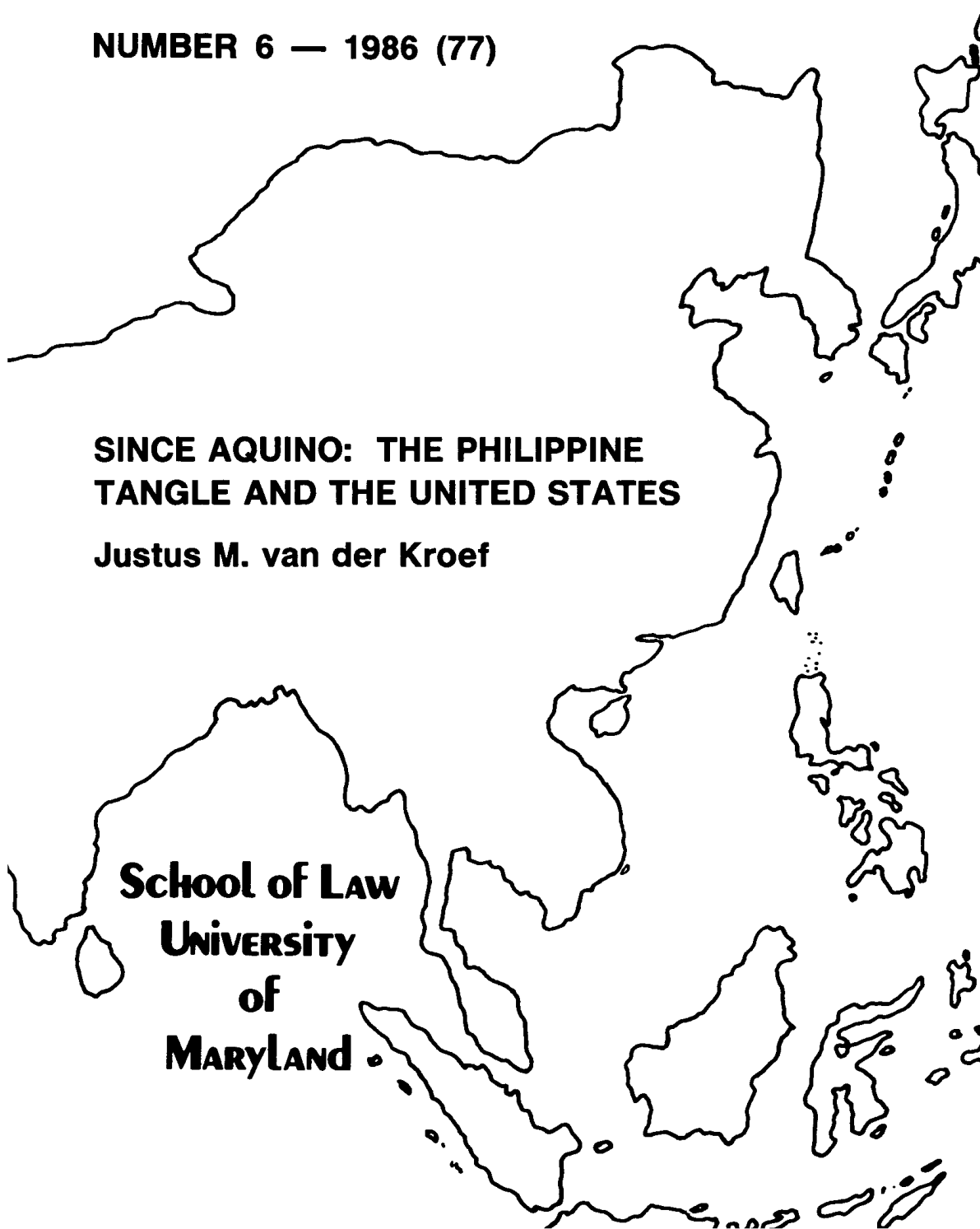
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**SINCE AQUINO: THE PHILIPPINE
TANGLE AND THE UNITED STATES**

Justus M. van der Kroef

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UNIVERSITY
of
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SINCE AQUINO: THE PHILIPPINE TANGLE AND THE UNITED STATES

Justus M. van der Kroef

"We can't get to where we want to until we spell out where we want to go—and the Cory regime hasn't furnished any of us with a road map," one leading Manila newspaper columnist complained in his assessment of Philippine President Corazon ("Cory") Aquino's first three months in office.¹ The criticism is not altogether fair. Since her sudden accession on February 25, 1986, as her nation's ninth President, Mrs. Aquino, a novice in the rough and tumble of Philippine politics, has shown surprising adroitness, moderation and courage in facing a host of daunting national problems, not least among them sharp public division and uncertainty over her country's future relationship with its erstwhile colonial mentor and oldest ally, the United States. By early 1987 her political survival seemed even more remarkable.

For Washington, the Philippines' course under Aquino and beyond hardly can be a matter of minor importance. Already in early March, 1986 a U.S. Defense Department study, details of which remain classified, estimated that (if it came to that) relocation of such U.S. military facilities in Luzon as the Clark Air Base and the Subic Bay Naval Station, to such nearby locations as Tinian or Guam, would cost at least \$8 billion.² As is known, the Clark and Subic leases expire in 1991, and while Mrs. Aquino has vowed that she will not disturb the lease arrangement until then, there is sharp controversy in her government and in Philippine society generally over any lease renewal, for reasons to be discussed below. Moreover, not just Subic and Clark are likely to be involved. There are 11 other military installations in the country—Cubi Point in La Union province, the Mactan Air Base in Cebu City and the U.S. Navy relay point in San Miguel, Tarlac province are a few—where the United States maintains sophisticated communications facilities.³

Important U.S. security and economic interests need to be re-

1. Maximo V. Soliven in *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, June 7, 1986, p. 5.

2. *The Straits Times* (Singapore), March 5, 1986, p. 6. See also William H. Sullivan, "Relocating Bases in the Philippines," *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Spring 1984), pp. 114-119.

3. *Midday* (Manila), June 6, 1986, p. 6.

solved in the Philippines' faction-ridden, Communist-endangered and poverty-stricken society. For Mrs. Aquino and/or her immediate successors, Philippine national problems fall into four major categories: (1) constitutional legitimacy; (2) the achievement of some stability with various contending power structures, among them political factions, the Catholic Church, the Army, the Communists and other armed dissidents and "private armies;" (3) a basis for long-term economic growth amidst an exploding population; and, (4) the nation's strategic and foreign policy priorities.

I. THE LEGITIMACY OF THE AQUINO GOVERNMENT

As for constitutional legitimacy, the political *fait accompli* of the February 1986 change of power tended to be confused with the rule of law. To be sure, there was from the start little question of Mrs. Aquino's considerable personal popularity, particularly among many of Metropolitan Manila's 7 million inhabitants. But the degree of that popularity in practical political terms, before as well as after the February 2, 1987 plebiscite on the new Aquino-initiated Philippine constitution, always has been more difficult to gauge. By the end of 1986, leading U.S. news media had hailed Mrs. Aquino's rise to power as a major event of that year. But to many Filipinos, her government thus far not only had brought little real change in living conditions and employment opportunities, but also had shown on occasion dangerous political weaknesses that were perceived—however unfairly—as comparing unfavorably with the regime of her predecessor.⁴

To the residue of Marcos loyalists and others, Mrs. Aquino's popularity, not to speak of the legitimacy of her Presidential position, are seriously undercut by three factors: (a) the questionable circumstances surrounding her "revolutionary" accession to power; (b) her attempt to revamp the local government structure by postponing scheduled local elections and by the summary dismissal of duly elected and/or appointed officials and their replacement by pro-Aquino "officers in charge;" and, (c) Mrs. Aquino's position under the new Constitution ultimately accepted by the country.

It is difficult to shake the impression that the initial acceptance of Mrs. Aquino and her regime was prompted at least to some degree by the growing aversion at home and abroad to the malversations of her predecessor. Widespread fraud and voter intimidation attended the "snap" Presidential election of February 7, 1986, called by then Presi-

4. Report from Manila by Lewis M. Simons, Knight-News-Tribuen news service, December 26, 1986.

dent Ferdinand Marcos almost as an act of bravura during an interview on the "This Week with David Brinkley" U.S. television news program on November 3, 1985. However, for several years prior to that election, Marcos had been subjected to a campaign of relentless criticism, particularly in the U.S. media. The criticism centered on serious allegations of human rights abuses by his regime, incompetence in meeting a growing Communist insurgency and economic mismanagement. Following the assassination of Philippine opposition leader Benigno Aquino on the tarmac of Manila International Airport on August 21, 1983—an assassination the responsibility for which reached to Marcos' closest advisers—the criticism sharply accelerated.⁵

Already in November 1984, a confidential U.S. National Security Council analysis had discussed the need for a "well orchestrated policy of incentives and disincentives" designed to bring about a "peaceful and eventual transition to a successor government" to that of Marcos.⁶ In April 1985, U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger expressed increasing concern about the deteriorating economic and security situation in the Philippines. By early October 1985, according to Representative Don McCurdy (D-Okla.), a member of the U.S. House of Representatives' Intelligence Committee, both the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency predicted a "catastrophe" for the Philippines to the House Intelligence and the House Armed Services Committees if Marcos remained in office and reforms were not carried out.⁷ Later that same month, after a visit to Marcos by Senator Paul Laxalt (R-Nev.) to indicate president Ronald Reagan's concern, officials from the U.S. State and Defense Departments testified before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee that Marcos' unwillingness to "clean up" his political system, improve the military's efficiency and break up his crony-ridden business monopolies could lead to a collapse in the Philippines. The same sources warned that current trends, including allegedly mounting anti-Marcos sentiment and public disaffection with existing political processes, could lead to a military stalemate

5. For some of these criticisms see, e.g., David Rosenberg, ed., *Marcos and Martial Law in the Philippines*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979; Walden Bello, et al., *Development Debacle: The World Bank in the Philippines*, San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1982; and Belinda A. Aquino, "The Human Rights Situation in the Philippines," *Journal of Asian-Pacific and World Perspectives*, vol. 6, no. 2 (Winter 1982-83), pp. 23-30.

6. Don Oberdorfer reported this in *The Washington Post*, February 24, 1986, p. 1, col. 4.

7. *The Straits Times*, April 6, 1985, p. 34 and October 10, 1985, p. 8.

with the Communist insurgents in as few as three years.⁸

Whether Philippine conditions were indeed as serious as these U.S. government representations made them out to be is arguable. Moreover, if these conditions were accurately portrayed, whether there was a clear official understanding of a realistic feasibility of democratic alternatives—certainly of a relatively enduring nature—to the Marcos regime seems equally open to debate. In any case, to some the Philippine doomsday scenario seemed premature. For example, a Communist call to boycott the May 1984 elections for the *Batasang Pambansa* (National Assembly) “failed miserably as throngs of Filipinos voted in a resounding endorsement of the electoral process,” and by the close of 1985, the Marcos Government appeared to be showing sufficient political will to deal with its economic problems so that, according to one authoritative survey, “the country’s economy may be on the road to recovery by 1986.”⁹ Even a senior U.S. Senate Department official, after ticking off the Philippines’ political and economic problems in early December 1985, conceded that “much of the reporting” about the country tended to be “apocalyptic.”¹⁰

Still, the avalanche of criticism undoubtedly helped to persuade Marcos on November 3, 1985 to call his “snap” Presidential poll (having been reelected for a six-year term in 1981 Marcos need not have run again until 1987). According to Laxalt, the idea of calling such an early election had been suggested to Marcos by CIA Director William Casey, but there has been no confirmation of this.¹¹ In any event, Marcos appeared confident, probably in view of the fact that past elections and constitutional plebescites during his tenure had demonstrated to him that he retained control over key local officials and over the electoral process generally. However, precisely because this control was well understood by his opponents and their foreign supporters, the February 7, 1986, Presidential election was subjected to an unprecedented degree of foreign and domestic press coverage, and to

8. *The New York Times*, October 31, 1985, p. 1, col. 3.

9. *Asia 1985 Yearbook* (Hongkong, Far Eastern Economic Review, 1985), p. 228, and *Asia 1986 Yearbook* (Hongkong, Far Eastern Economic Review, 1985), p. 225. For a view more sympathetic to Marcos, see also A. James Gregor, *Crisis in the Philippines: A Threat to U.S. Interests* (Washington Ethics and Public Policy Center: Georgetown University, 1984).

10. U.S. Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Michael H. Armacost, “The U.S. and the Philippines: Dangers and Opportunities,” *Current Policy* (Washington: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs), no. 774, (December 5, 1985), p. 3.

11. Paul Laxalt, “My Conversations With Ferdinand Marcos,” *Policy Review*, (Summer 1986), pp. 2-5.

the scrutiny of a visiting team of official U.S. election observers headed by Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.).

Then, too, Marcos' opponents, though some were at least in theory outside the formal Philippine political process, mounted a major effort to bring him down. For example, it had been difficult for the various, splintered, anti-Marcos political forces even to agree on a single opposition slate. The leading United Nationalist Democratic Organization (UNIDO) and its president, Salvador Laurel, at first proved unwilling to take second place, on a common opposition ticket, to Mrs. Corazon Aquino. Mrs. Aquino had emerged as the Presidential candidate of the much smaller *Lakas ng Bayan* (*Laban* for short) or "People's Power Movement." Only the direct intervention of Jaime Cardinal Sin, Primate of the Philippine Roman Catholic Church, to which some 85 percent of all Filipinos belong, had managed to bring about a unified opposition ticket, in which Mrs. Aquino ran for the Presidential slot under the Unido banner. Salvador Laurel was named as her Vice Presidential running mate.

Moreover, just as Marcos had his lobbyists in the United States, so in the weeks before the election Mrs. Aquino acquired influential U.S. Congressional support, as well as the services of U.S. legal and consulting firms. As one Aquino lobbyist in Washington put it, it was well understood in his camp that the "court of world opinion" would be decisive in determining the election outcome.¹² It was in that "court of world opinion" that Marcos ultimately lost the gamble of his "snap" Presidential election. There is no doubt that, according to then prevailing Philippine Constitutional processes, he had won the election. On February 15, 1986, the 200-member *Batasang Pambansa*, over the vain protests of anti-Marcos members, officially tabulated the election returns and certified Marcos as the winner by some 1.5 million votes.¹³ But internationally reported and persuasive evidence of widespread fraud and voter intimidation almost at once robbed Marcos of his claim to victory and constitutional legitimacy.

Though legal machinery for an investigation of such election irregularities existed, Mrs. Aquino, probably doubting the fairness of her chances in such a process, chose not to use the verification process. Meanwhile, international media focused their attention on the fraudulent vote count of the Marcos government's Comelec (Commission on Elections), and on vote buying, ballot box stuffing and voter intima-

12. *The New York Times*, March 13, 1986, p. A8, col. 1.

13. Maharlika Broadcasting System news report, Quezon City, February 15, 1986, in Foreign Broadcasting Information Service Reports (hereafter FBIS), February 18, 1986, p. P2.

tion by pro-Marcos “goon” squads. Later the foreign press was to congratulate itself for having “helped to dump a despot” by exposing these election malversations.¹⁴ In contrast, the supposedly “honest mistakes” in the vote count admitted by the pro-Aquino Namfrel (National Movement for Free Elections), and the charges by Philippine officials that there were serious elections violations by Namfrel representatives and “gun-toting Namfrel men” harassing voters, went virtually unreported in the U.S. and foreign press.¹⁵

There were other anomalies. The final Namfrel vote count, issued on February 25, 1986, in which Aquino was declared the winner by more than 782,000 votes, widely was regarded abroad as authoritative. This occurred even though Namfrel itself admitted in its final report that its data had come from only 70 percent of the country’s voter turnout and that it could not vouch for the remaining 30 percent!¹⁶

The curiously one-sided media coverage and the failure to investigate charges of vote fraud by partisans of *both* camps in the election did much to tarnish Marcos’ image further in the United States. It also emboldened the opposition against Marcos even after the *Batasang Pambansa* on February 15, 1986 formally certified him as the election winner. On June 11, 1986, the U.S. team headed by Senator Richard Lugar that had observed the election reported that Mrs. Aquino had won a majority of the votes. Lugar also said that the Namfrel count “stands as the only reliable indicator” of the Philippine voter preference.¹⁷ While Lugar’s statement may well be true, absent a thorough and impartial investigation into the allegations of fraud on both sides, it is difficult to see the basis of the observer team’s conclusion.

The issue is not academic. It was not the “fairness” of the Namfrel count, nor a widespread perception (whether justified or not) of the inherent legitimacy of the election victory that on February 25

14. David H. Bain, “Letter from Manila—How the Press Helped to Dump a Despot,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, (May-June 1986), pp. 27-36.

15. For details and sources see Justus M. van der Kroef, “The Philippines of Aquino: the Long Morning After,” *World Affairs* (Washington), vol. 148, no. 3, (Winter 1985-86), pp. 139-150.

16. *Business Day* (Manila), February 25, 1986, p. 18. See also FBIS, February 27, 1986, p. P14.

17. *Philippines Daily Express* (Manila), June 12, 1986, p. 2. See also *Report to the President of the United States of America on the February 7, 1986 Presidential Election in the Philippines Submitted by the United States Observer Delegation*. Prepared by the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate and The Center for Democracy, Boston University: U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1986.

catapulted Mrs. Aquino into the Presidency. Rather, it was the military crisis between Marcos and his long-term ally, Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, who reportedly has been entertaining presidential aspirations for some time (though currently he disclaims such ambitions).¹⁸ Whether Enrile, as Marcos contends, saw his chance and decided to overthrow Marcos as the clamor, especially abroad, began to mount in the aftermath of the tainted February 7 Presidential election, or whether Marcos, perhaps suspecting a coup, preemptively decided to strike against his Defense Minister first, will not be known for some time. But in the ensuing power play between Enrile and Marcos, which ended, it will be recalled, with the President leaving the country after a seemingly unwinnable and bloodless stalemate, Mrs. Aquino appears to have figured only marginally.

Subsequently, Enrile revealed that, during his defiance of Marcos in the tense days of February 22-25, 1986, his support for Corazon Aquino was only his (Enrile's) third option. He initially preferred establishing a "revolutionary council" or, secondly, some sort of "people's committee," involving prominent personalities, among them clergy and labor leaders. He abandoned these ideas after consulting, during his confrontation with Marcos, with his (Enrile's) ally, then Philippine Constabulary Chief, and presently Armed Forces Commander, General Fidel Ramos. It became apparent to him, Enrile said, that it might not seem wise for "ourselves in the military organization" to be seen establishing a "people's committee."¹⁹ Instead, it was decided to take what one Enrile supporter later called the "complete civilian route." Thus, contact with an agreement to forge a government headed by Aquino and Laurel was made—provided Enrile retained his position as Secretary of Defense. The latter condition was accepted by Aquino with some reluctance, considering Enrile's status as a longtime Marcos "crony."

To be sure, a major turn in the rebellion against Marcos was the gathering of thousands of Manilans, who, mobilized by their clergy, labor, and student leaders, interposed themselves as a human wall on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (commonly called "EDSA") between Marcos' tanks and Enrile's and Ramos' rebel headquarters at Camp Crame. In the end, though, it was not the "miracle on EDSA" (as many Manilans now dub this episode) but Enrile's defiance, backed by his own crack military units at Crame, and the entreaties of U.S. offi-

18. *Asiaweek* (Hongkong), July 13, 1986, pp. 10-15; *The Economist* (London), July 12, 1986, p. 30.

19. Agence France Presse despatch, Manila, May 9, 1986, in FBIS, May 9, 1986, p. P4.

cials who urged Marcos to avoid a bloody confrontation, that forced the President to back down. Enrile and Ramos, calculating the alignment of forces at play, were shrewd enough, at the time, to accept (and, perhaps in Enrile's case, also make use of) Mrs. Aquino's undoubted personal popularity as symbol of a widely desired, fresh political beginning for the Philippines. However, all this is not the same as saying that Mrs. Aquino, as a result of the February 7 elections, or even because of the "miracle on EDSA," necessarily had acquired a personal constitutional mandate to be President.

That Mrs. Aquino nevertheless acquired the aura of such a mandate was the result of a widespread public sense of relief that bloody chaos had been avoided, and also of a realization, both in the Philippines and abroad, especially in the United States, that the practical exigencies of government and international relations demanded at least some sort of government in the Philippines. Much of the Philippine judiciary readily recognized this reality, thus further legitimizing Aquino. For example, in adjudicating one lawsuit seeking clarification of Marcos' claim to the Presidency, a new, Aquino-appointed Philippine Supreme Court ruled in mid-October 1986, that Mrs. Aquino was the legitimate Philippine President "as reflected in the collective judgment" of the Filipino people and by virtue of "recognition" of her regime by other nations.²⁰ Just how that Filipino "collective judgment" could be reconciled with the Philippine constitution at the time of the February 7, 1986 Presidential election, and with the decision of the *Batasang Pambansa* of February 15, 1986 ruling on that election, was not revealed by this Supreme Court judgment. The Court apparently also chose to sidestep the question of whether international recognition of a particular national regime necessarily overrides any question of its legitimacy under that nation's own municipal law, or by what process that law had been properly superseded.

There were other aspects of U.S. policy toward Marcos and the February 7, 1986 Presidential election that had a troubling effect on Mrs. Aquino's new position. Philippine elections, whether national or local, and whether before or after Marcos' imposition of martial law in 1972, have a long history of fraud and violence.²¹ One may laud the U.S. government's decision—for the first time in Philippine history—to observe Marcos' "snap" election of February 7, 1986. Having goaded Marcos into calling the election and testing his legitimacy by a

20. *The New York Times*, October 27, 1986, p. 3, col. 1.

21. M. Aurora Carbonell-Catilo, J.H. De Leon, and Eleanor E. Nicolas, *Manipulated Elections* (College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, Quezon City, 1986).

constant and unprecedented stream of official Cassandra-like warnings and criticism of his regime (a process further encouraged perhaps by CIA director Casey's suggestion), the United States now had the added opportunity to discredit Marcos further.

For anyone familiar with the Filipino political power structure and the functioning of the well-oiled political machine Marcos had built since coming to office in 1965, it is difficult to believe that election malversations rivalling anything the old city boss politics in the United States could reveal, would not now be rediscovered in the Philippines in the election of February 7, 1986. Was the decision to send a U.S. observer team part of that "well orchestrated policy of incentives and disincentives" to bring Marcos down, as outlined by a previously cited National Security Council analysis issued more than a year earlier?

One may only speculate as to the answer at this point. The subsequent U.S. denunciations of the February 7 election fraud, however, have a rather hollow ring, as discussed above. The most recent general elections in the Philippines that were held before the Presidential poll of February 7, 1986 took place on May 14, 1984. These were the elections for the *Batasang Pambansa*, the country's unicameral national legislature. There was extensive partisan campaigning in this 1984 election. Even so, few observers doubted that Marcos' "New Society Movement" or *Kilusan Bagong Lipunan-KBL*) would win a resounding victory, in view of the President's effective hold on his nation's local government elite and bureaucracy. And yet, parties in opposition to the KBL won 61 of the 183 seats in this 1984 *Batasang* election, a significant increase from the 16 seats they had held in the previous legislature. Moreover, principal KBL leaders and Marcos confidants, including four cabinet ministers, lost their seats. Jaime Cardinal Sin, a frequent Marcos critic, characterized these May 1984 elections "as the cleanest and most honest since martial law" had been imposed in 1972, and indeed "among the best since World War II." Nevertheless there had been fraud and extensive KBL bribery of voters, although "many people took the money and T-shirts offered but voted to a large extent as they wished."²²

Against such a background, characterizations of the relative "honesty" or fraudulence of the 1984 *Batasang*, or of any other Filipino elections for that matter, become suspect. Of course, the country's own political culture and standards must be considered. One

22. Herbert S. Malin, "The Philippines in 1984. Grappling with Crisis," *Asian Survey*, February, 1985, pp. 198-205, and *Asia Yearbook 1985* (Far Eastern Economic Review, Hongkong, 1985), p. 228.

example may illustrate the point. On February 19, 1986, well after furtious criticism at home and abroad had erupted over the fraud perpetrated during the Marcos-Aquino Presidential election twelve days earlier, a spokesman for the Philippine Constabulary, the national police, attempted to put matters in context. He declared that, according to official tabulations, 130 persons had been killed in election-related violence during the 1984 *Batasang* elections. In the internationally more publicized and controversial February 7, 1986 Marcos-Aquino Presidential contest, however, "only" 91 such deaths had been counted: 43 of them of KBL supporters, 24 followers of Aquino, and the others of undetermined political affiliation.²³ General Fidel Ramos, Enrile's ally in the anti-Marcos rebellion of February 22-25, who subsequently was appointed Philippine Armed Forces Chief by president Aquino, had sounded a similar note on February 4, 1986, just three days before the Presidential poll. Ramos said that there were "far fewer" deaths during the 1986 Marcos-Aquino Presidential campaign than in 1984, when the "unofficial" count of election-related deaths had reached 2,000.²⁴

Could there have been as many as 2,000 violent deaths (not to speak of other malversations) during the 1984 *Batasang* elections? There were no criticisms in the U.S. or other foreign press about these 1984 Philippine elections, nor does one recall alarmed voices being raised in the U.S. administration or Congress. Was the February 7, 1986 Presidential election relatively "cleaner" and even more "honest" than the *Batasang* election of 1984? One could hesitate to say so, even if some common agreement on a yardstick to make such judgments could be found. But what, then, is the justification for questioning the certification on February 16, 1986 by that same 1984 elected *Batasang* that Ferdinand Marcos was the duly reelected President of the Philippines?

To focus on ballot fraud, voter intimidation and violence in the February 7, 1986 Philippine Presidential election in order to "delegitimize" Marcos, when such malversations have characterized all Philippino national elections to date, is to raise the disquieting spectre of having to delegitimize all previously elected Philippine Presidents. Whether, henceforth, the United States should or should not feel obligated to send election observer teams and officially pronounce on the winner in future Philippine polls is difficult to answer. To add to all

23. Agence France Presse desptach, Manila, March 4, 1986, in FBIS, March 5, 1986, p. P1.

24. Agence France Presse despatch, February 4, 1986, in FBIS, February 4, 1986, p. P15.

this a "legitimization" of Mrs. Aquino on the basis of the dubious Namfrel vote count is only to entangle the knot of constitutionality even further.

Perhaps worse, to brush aside pointed press reminders of analogous situations in other parts of the world is to undermine seriously any moral basis for the U.S. campaign against Marcos.

For example, in June 1986, Reagan Administration officials declared that the United States had "conclusive evidence" of extensive fraud in the 1984 Presidential election in Panama, including an unlawful overturning of the results of that election on orders of the Panamanian army commander, the country's current strongman, General Manuel Noriega. Reminded by the press of the recent situation in the Philippines in this connection, U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz justified continuing U.S. policy of support for Noriega by noting that: (a) an official Panamanian commission had certified the election results and the United States would "try to work with the government that emerged" (shades of the *Batasang's* certification of Marcos!); and, (b) with reference to the Panamanians: "It's their election not our election. We don't go around the world certifying elections."²⁵ Shultz added that the situation in the Philippines had been different because Filipinos had "expressed themselves" about their 1986 election "very forcefully." From the latter statement the unwary might conclude that "forceful expression," henceforth, would be a U.S. criterion for political recognition and legitimacy.

To be sure, Mrs. Aquino and her advisers were mindful of the questions surrounding the legitimacy of her assumed Presidential position. However, her attempts to assert legitimacy by means other than another new and less tainted Presidential election have become the target of new criticisms. Aquino promulgated "proclamation no. 5," an interim, so-called "Freedom Constitution" (March 25, 1986) on the basis of "the sovereign mandate of the people."²⁶ This term—in light of constitutional events—was perceived by many as more in the nature of a rhetorical or political conceit, rather than as a well-grounded claim in then existing public law.

The issue also raised again with additional force the question (see below) of whether Mrs. Aquino would not be better served by formally proclaiming a "revolutionary government," instead of seeking to maintain a basis of legitimacy in a controversial election or in the "Miracle on EDSA" mass demonstration. In fact, the interim "Free-

25. *The New York Times*, June 24, 1986, p. A7, col. 1.

26. *Manila Bulletin*, March 26, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, March 28, 1986, p. P1.

dom Constitution" (article 1, section 1) provided that the President, until the election of a new legislature under a new popularly ratified constitution, also would "continue to exercise legislative power."

Further controversy soon arose over the proposed new permanent Constitution drafted by a special Aquino-appointed Commission. The provisions of this new charter were announced on October 12, 1986. Under section 7 of this new Constitution's "Transitory Provisions," Aquino's term as "incumbent President" is "hereby extended to noon of June 30, 1992."²⁷ But even such pro-Aquino political leaders as Homobono Adaza asserted that since Aquino in effect earlier had abolished the 1973 Constitution under which she had run, and therefore implicitly had declared a "revolutionary" regime, her present Presidential term should end when a regular constitutional government assumed office. Hence Adaza, among others, argued that Mrs. Aquino was required to seek a fresh Presidential mandate (assuming she wished to do so) under the new Constitution that she had helped to foster.²⁸

Juan Ponce Enrile, perhaps Aquino's sharpest critic, as well as some respected Philippine constitutional commentators, also adopted this point of view. Enrile in particular stressed an alleged "Catch-22" anomaly in Mrs. Aquino's position, pointing out that she had been sworn in as President for a six-year term under the Marcos-approved Constitution of 1973, a document which she now in effect had repudiated.²⁹ Meanwhile, even though she had proclaimed the interim "Freedom" Constitution on March 25, 1986, and then endorsed the ConCom's draft of a new Constitution, Mrs. Aquino based the legitimacy of her Presidential powers on the 1973 Constitution. To those who asked her whether she regarded the February 2, 1987 plebiscite on the new Constitution as being, in effect, a referendum on her own Presidency, she invariably replied "no," adding that "when the people voted" in the February 7, 1986 Presidential election "they knew it was for a term of six years. They did not think the term was just for a while. That's very, very, clear."

However, the partisan intensity aroused by the issue of Mrs. Aquino's constitutional legitimacy is unlikely to evaporate, even after plebiscitary approval of the new Constitution. One may be skeptical

27. *New Day* (Quezon City), October 13, 1986, pp. 9-13, in FBIS, October 17, 1986, p. P45.

28. Agence France Presse despatch, Manila, October 13, 1986, in FBIS, October 14, 1986, p. P14.

29. See Enrile's Manila interview with Karen Elliott House, in *The Wall Street Journal*, October 21, 1986, p. 36.

about Enrile's claim that, when he and Ramos and their followers accepted Mrs. Aquino as President upon Marcos' flight, "we did this on the assumption that they would organize a civil government in accordance with the constitution existing at the time."³⁰ In the face of all the criticism, Mrs. Aquino's own unrelenting refusal ever to run for another Presidential term should give those convinced of her wide popularity some pause. Moreover, what is one to think of the view of one of Aquino's closest advisers, her formal Local Government minister and current cabinet member, Aquilino Pimentel, who opposed the holding of a new Presidential election even after ratification of the new Constitution? Holding a Presidential election after a Constitutional ratification, Pimentel said, "would result in a fullscale bloodbath in the country," as it would create "deep cleavages" and "exacerbate" the "feelings of hatred" among the people, and, in any case, would hamper the country's economic recovery.³¹ Great confidence in the political, let alone constitutional, legitimacy of the Aquino government cannot be said to emanate from this assessment.

II. NEW FACTIONS AND POLICY CONTROVERSIES

The uncertainties that Mrs. Aquino and her advisers may have felt about the constitutional legitimacy of her position were augmented by various political factors. For one thing, Marcos, having refused to resign his Presidential office at the time he left the country on February 25, 1986, gave contradictory signals as to his intentions from his Honolulu exile.³² In subsequent months, he alternately urged support for "the government of Madame Cory Aquino," and repeatedly declared that he still was President of the Philippines. He almost certainly encouraged the pro-Marcos demonstrations that regularly have been held on Sunday in Manila's Rizal Park since his departure. In mid-May 1986, Secretary Shultz publicly rebuked Marcos for "causing trouble" for the Aquino government.³³ Nevertheless, Marcos reportedly authorized and was repeatedly in telephone contact with his former Foreign Minister and 1986 Vice Presidential running mate, Arturo Tolentino, during the latter's near-farcical two-day coup attempt staged at the Manila Hotel on July 6, 1986.

30. Radio Veritas in Tagalog, October 2, 1986, in FBIS, October 3, 1986, p. P4.

31. *Business Day*, September 26, 1986, p. 14, in FBIS, September 29, 1986, p. P6.

32. There is the added complication that Marcos, when he left his Malacanan palace on February 25, 1986, probably was under the impression he was not being flown out of the country, but rather was being transported to his home in Ilocos Norte, Luzon. See Laxalt, "My conversations with Ferdinand Marcos," *supra* note 11, at p. 3.

33. *The New York Times*, Mary 14, 1986, p. 1, col. 7.

In some measure, Marcos' persistence, and that of his followers, reflects not only the uncertainties of but also the contradictions in the Aquino government's constitutional position and early reform policies. More particularly, they also relate to the new government's relationship with the political establishment of the parties, and with the stalwarts and lesser elements of the old regime. Strictly speaking, these areas are matters of domestic Filipino politics, and U.S. officials have been loathe to intrude—at least too visibly. Yet, it is difficult for the Reagan Administration to back off now from Mrs. Aquino's governing problems, having done so much to assist her predecessor's political fall. Therefore, these problems deserve brief notice.

As indicated above, the question of proclaiming a new "revolutionary" government in order to provide a basis for the new government soon came under review. Within hours after having formed her cabinet on February 27, 1986, Mrs. Aquino reportedly was studying the advisability of formally declaring such a "revolutionary government." One popular Manila columnist declared exuberantly that Aquino's "revolutionary government" was bound neither by "any constitution nor any set of laws," and thus could "straighten out the mess." One of Aquino's chief advisers said in mid-March that her regime still was "under pressure" to declare itself "a revolutionary government" so as to be able to "dismantle" the "unjust structures" created by Marcos.³⁴ Aquino apparently already had chosen not to legitimize her position on the basis of the *Batasang Pambansa's* role in certifying Presidential elections under the existing 1973 Constitution. Her legitimization on this basis could have occurred by a new certification vote of her status as President by the *Batasang Pambansa*. Although shortly after Marcos fled the country, 130 KBL members of the *Batasang* pledged support to Aquino that would have assured her certification as President in a new *Batasang* vote she rejected such support, declaring that "I do not believe people he actually terrorized and cheated."³⁵

Mrs. Aquino may well have been repelled by the apparent political cynicism of the 130 KBL *Batasang* members. She probably calculated that they were motivated less by a newly found loyalty to her and more by their interest in keeping both their positions and the existing *Batasang* in operation. But there also were 61 anti-Marcos opposition

34. Benedicto David in *Bulletin Today* (Manila), March 1, 1986, p. 6, in FBIS, March 6, 1986, p. P9, Philippine News Agency despatch, March 17, 1986, in FBIS, March 18, 1986, p. P4.

35. Agence France Presse despatch, Manila, March 4, 1986, in FBIS, March 5, 1986, p. P1.

members. The net effect of Aquino's decision was to strengthen the authority of the chief executive and to signal an apparent unwillingness to begin practicing the art of parliamentary politics. To some observers, neither of these two positions seemed calculated to strengthen a perception of a return to more democratic government, however such government may have become tainted in the modern Philippine experience. As noted, on March 25, 1986, Aquino issued by proclamation a new interim or "Freedom" Constitution. This document, in article I section 3, effectively dissolved the *Batasang Pambansa* (elected in 1984 for a six-year term), and in article II section 1, declared that "Until a legislature is convened under a new constitution, the President shall continue to exercise legislative power."³⁶ All this meant, as Asia's leading news weekly put it, that the new Philippines of Aquino "now has no legislature at all: an unusual position for a popularly based regime."³⁷

The interim Constitution strikes a high crusading tone. It declares that, acting on a perceived people's "mandate," the President "shall give priority" to measures which, among others "completely reorganize the government," eradicating "unjust and oppressive structures," and "all iniquitous vestiges" of the Marcos regime. But what that mandate amounted to in practice soon began to arouse bitter opposition, both from members within Mrs. Aquino's own cabinet and party-based following, and from among the various constituencies of her pro-Marcos opponents. A change from the autocratic tenor of her predecessor's regime seemed not always easy to accomplish. For example, on June 2, 1986, a 48-member Constitutional Commission—provided for by the new interim Constitution—began its sessions. The "Concom" produced a new proposed permanent charter for the nation, the provisions of which were announced with Aquino's approval on October 12, 1986. All "Concom" members, however, were appointed by Mrs. Aquino. When asked why "Concom" members could not be popularly elected in the "post-dictatorship" era of "people power," Aquino's new Justice Minister Neptali Gonzalez replied that popular election of the Constitutional Commission "May not necessarily result in the election of the most qualified" persons capable of drafting "the best constitution possible."³⁸ Such answers only managed to deepen the disquiet of those who were beginning to fear that the advent of the Aquino government merely meant replacing one autocracy with another.

36. *Manila Bulletin*, March 26, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, March 28, 1986, p. P1.

37. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 3, 1986, p. 13.

38. *The New York Times*, March 26, 1986, p. A3, col. 3.

Even more controversial and damaging to the democratic image she tried to project was Aquino's policy toward local government officials. On February 26, 1986, only hours after she had assumed Presidential office, Mrs. Aquino first announced that local elections, scheduled for May that year, would be postponed. She blamed "uncertainties and divisions" within the nation for her decision. Two days later, just after her cabinet had been appointed, Aquino's then Minister for Local Government, Aquilino Pimentel, announced the discharge of some 220 provincial governors, majors and other local officials, even though most of these had been duly elected, and shortly would have faced reelection. Those discharged apparently were perceived as unreliable Marcos loyalists, and their Aquino-appointed replacements, dubbed "Officers in Charge" (OIC), evidently were seen as essential to effect the eradication of "unjust and oppressive structures" promised by the new "Freedom" Constitution.

The storm of protests and its consequences, which this decision to appoint OICs provoked, will be considered shortly. First, however, the new regime's decision to discharge local officials touched the nub of Mrs. Aquino's governing problems, and, indeed, was the core of her constitutional legitimacy, as well. During the more than two decades that he was the Philippines' chief executive, Marcos (1) skillfully built an effective local government machinery, oiled by affirmations of traditional local elite family privileges, by raw patronage power, political and financial favors, and by the virtually feudal pattern of mutual obligations, control and protection prevailing in much of the countryside, and (2) through this machinery, was able repeatedly to have duly ratified national constitutional government institutions and processes produce for him the desired results in various national referenda, constitutional changes and elections. More than one U.S. critic of these practices has heard a Filipino reply that his fellow countrymen learned their lessons of vote-count trickery and "boss" politics from their American mentors.

Neither Aquino nor Pimentel probably foresaw, however, the extent of the outburst of opposition to the OIC appointments. In town after town, mayors refused to surrender their offices, barricading themselves with their followers—including sympathetic local military—in their town halls: by mid-July 1986, one foreign reporter, after visting the Central Luzon region, reported that "in Ilocos Sur (province) none of the mayors from the Marcos time has handed over his post to

the officer in charge appointed by Mrs. Aquino.”³⁹ In Mindanao and the Visayas, at least one pro-Marcos provincial governor and other local officials, together with several hundred members of their “private armies,” reportedly “took to the hills” to lead a resistance and periodically kidnap foreign travellers in an obvious effort to embarrass the Aquino government.

Also, Aquino supporters turned against her. One anti-Marcos *Batasang* member, Roy Padilla, sharply criticized the dismissal of local officials and the cancellation of local elections as “showing dictatorial tendencies”; in the province of Tarlac, the provincial chairman of the Unido party (United Nationalist Democratic Organization)—the party under whose banner Aquino herself had run in the February 7, 1986 Presidential election—resigned “in protest against the violations of laws by some ranking officials of the new government.”⁴⁰ In fact, on March 5, Unido Secretary General René Espina, evidently with the approval of Unido chairman Salvador Laurel—Aquino’s running mate and currently Philippines Vice President and Foreign Minister—formally declared that Unido was “distancing itself from the Aquino government” because the latter was “committing political slaughter among local officials.”⁴¹

Already on March 19, 1986, Aquino announced that she would have “the final say” in the new OIC appointments, but confusion and bitter controversy continued. Persons other than those designated in official government announcements reportedly were presenting themselves as OICs in several towns, a number of other designated OICs were found to be facing various legal charges, and in other instances “turncoat” KBL followers and other allegedly “opportunistic” former Marcos supporters suddenly appeared to have been designated as OICs under the Unido label.⁴²

Although Mrs. Aquino denounced what she termed the debasement of national politics by the KBL, and though she seemed anxious to reform the political system by eradicating party favoritism and rivalries, the President’s followers in her cabinet and in the government bureaucracies perceived the fall of Marcos as the usual “change of

39. Richard West, “Still Faithful to Ferdinand,” *The Spectator* (London), July 12, 1986, p. 12.

40. *Times Journal* (Manila), March 4, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, March 6, 1986, p. P11; *The New York Times*, March 1, 1986, p. 6, col. 1.

41. PNA despatch, Manila, March 5, 1986, in FBIS, March 5, 1986, p. P4.

42. *The News Herald* (Manila), June 11, 1986, p. 11, col. 7; *The Philippine Tribune* (Manila), June 6, 1986, p. 1, col. 6; *Philippines Free Press* (Manila), June 14, 1986, p. 14, col. 1.

guard" opportunity to ensconce themselves and their allies in positions of power. Sharp power struggles and a reportedly "mad scramble" for local offices broke out within days of Aquino's accession between Laurel's Unido and Aquino's Laban party (*Lakas Ng Bayan*-“People's Power Movement”),⁴³ which has been allied closely with Pimentel's own PDP or Philippine Democratic Party). There remained also a plethora of lesser parties, among them the pro-Aquino, left-liberal (with a following among reform-minded young professionals and businessmen) “Union for Democracy,” and the Mindanao Alliance, was formed to lift the Southern Philippines' largest island out of its undeveloped and strife-torn state. Marcos loyalists and others disaffected with the new Aquino regime found a new rallying point in the *Partido Nacionalista ng Philipinas* (PNP), led by Blas Ople, Marcos' former Labor Minister. During the second half of 1986, under Pimentel's direction, and despite Aquino's and Laurel's strictures, PDP-Laban stalwarts continued to be pushed as much as possible for local government positions. The resentment this process provoked among incumbents and their own respective local clients and supporters was aggravated further by (a) charges of allegedly left leaning political ideologies of some of the new OIC appointees, and (b) by the new OICs' incompetence and/or lack of experience. Instances of fake OIC appointment letters, issued with the alleged connivance of former Communist party chairman José M. Sison, added still more fuel to the controversy.⁴⁴

In the deepening political controversy during this period between Enrile and his Army supporters on the one hand, and Aquino on the other, the issue of the OIC replacements was drawn ever deeper into the larger question of whether Mrs. Aquino could deal effectively with the Communist problem. In mid-October 1986, Enrile submitted a number of requested policy changes to Aquino. Among these was the removal of “undesirable” or “unpopular” OICs, and their replacement by local leaders more acceptable to the population, whether or not these such leaders were or had been Marcos adherents.⁴⁵ On October 22, 1986, Aquino announced that she would institute a “purge” among appointed OIC, as “quite a few” of them had “fallen way below our expectations.”⁴⁶ The views of her Armed Forces Commander, General Fidel Ramos, may well have been decisive for Mrs.

43. *Business Day* (Manila), March 3, 1986, p. 12, in FBIS, March 5, 1986, P. P18.

44. *The Manila Times*, October 20, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, October 21, 1986, p. P8.

45. *Business Day*, October 23, 1986, p. 24, in FBIS, October 24, 1986, p. P1.

46. Agence France Presse despatch, Manila, October 22, 1986, in FBIS, October 23, 1986, p. P4.

Aquino. Late in October 1986, Ramos, in an implicit criticism of Pimentel's policies, said that some of the newly appointed OIC had been obstructing the coordination between military and civilian officials who were needed to deal more effectively with the problem of the Communist insurgency.⁴⁷

Just how far the promised OIC "purge," in fact, would be carried out remained an open question—and a continuing source of public controversy—during subsequent months. At the time of the November 23, 1986 reshuffle of Aquino's cabinet (which saw Enrile depart as Defense Minister, but Pimentel remain as the President's "adviser on national affairs" with cabinet rank), Pimentel's political objective seemed to have been accomplished to a considerable degree. As one of Aquino's cabinet ministers at the time of the cabinet reshuffle told the correspondent of Asia's leading news weekly, Pimentel "already has done the hard work in planting PDP-Laban appointees around the country." He added that Pimentel "can now watch" his replacement as Local Government Minister, PDP-Laban member Jaime Ferrer, a former Elections Commission Chairman, "guard the fort."⁴⁸ All this suggested that the Aquino regime, far from marking a break with the corrupt practices of political manipulation of the era of Marcos and his predecessors, very much was insuring that its own manipulative machinery was being installed during its tenure in power—particularly in time for the February 2, 1987 plebiscite on the new Constitution and the subsequent Congressional elections.

Indeed, what quickly became apparent from the inter-party feuding over the OIC question and other political controversies in the Aquino era was that, at the end of "the dictatorship" (as the Marcos period now customarily is referred to in the Philippines), and whatever fate the new and presumably less "unjust and oppressive structures" of government which the Constitutional Commission and the Philippine electorate would approve, the traditional patterns of modern Filipino political culture would not easily be dislodged. Pessimists tended to see in the cacaphony of political opinion and mutual recrimination that attended the advent of the Aquino era less the emergence of a new era of freedom for the Philippines and more a return to the less inhibited partisan infighting and media exuberance of the pre-Marcos era. With new national legislative elections scheduled for May 11, 1987, there had come during the second half of 1986 an eruption of new

47. *The New York Times*, November 1, 1986, p. 4.

48. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 18, 1986, p. 14.

parties and factional divisions.⁴⁹ The fate of Laurel's Unido, in a seemingly PDP-Laban-dominated government; of the old, once powerful, but now badly split Liberal Party; of the revived Enrile-oriented Nacionalistas; and, of such newer, leftist groups as the fellow-traveling People's Party (*Partido ng Bayan*) led by former Communist Party chairman José Sison, might have enlivened the political discussions in Manila coffeeshops. They also may have enhanced the impression of a climate of political freedom, as did the appearance of half a dozen new dailies in and around the capital. But whether—considering the political scene in the years before Marcos—all this added up to a national format of sustained political stability that would make accelerated and much needed economic development possible, remained very much in doubt.

Certainly, the new February, 1987 Constitution will provide abundant opportunity for political jousting and strife. There is, for example, provision for a bicameral legislature with different terms of office for its members, as well as an electoral system that, during its first three sessions, will have representatives from different "sectors" of society (e.g. the peasantry, women, organized labor). The electoral system also will provide for party list appointments and for direct electoral district balloting. This complex system, though ostensibly designed to diffuse the power of major parties, including those that are government-led, seems likely to provide the opportunity for making Philippine politics even more of a full time preoccupation than it was in the past. Critics note that, of the new Constitution's 321 provisions—the most numerous of any of the country's charters—99 are qualified by such phrases as: "as may be provided by law," or "as Congress may provide."⁵⁰ In other words, the partisan political process of the future has yet to define much of the content and scope of the nation's new fundamental law. This should make for a particularly lively environment in the drafting of public policy. And though as a reaction to the political constraints and abuses of the Marcos era, the diffusion of the electoral system under the new Constitution may seem understandable, one wonders if all this is likely to enhance the country's attraction to foreign investors.

Meanwhile, new opportunities for debilitating political wheeling and dealing were opened as the Commission on Good Government of the Aquino regime first began "sequestering" (i.e. impounding) the properties of the Marcos family and their many close business and

49. *Asiaweek*, November 2, 1986, p. 16.

50. *Ibid.*, October 26, 1986, p. 26.

political associates and, later, for various legal and/or political reasons, began releasing those properties to their original owners or agents. At the same time, from within her own political constituency, Mrs. Aquino was being castigated for reappointing José Fernandez and Cesar Zalamea, respectively, as Governor of the Central Bank and as Chairman of the development Bank of the Philippines, despite, as Unido Secretary General René Espina put it, "their known deep involvement in the web of corruption of the Marcos regime."⁵¹

On all of these less than promising developments in the Aquino era the United States tried to place as good a face as possible, adopting essentially a "let's wait till the dust settles" and a "let's think positively" kind of official attitude. Then, as in the second half of 1986, the conflict between Mrs. Aquino and her Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile deepened, and rumors of a plot to overthrow Mrs. Aquino began flying thick and fast, the Reagan Administration's representatives repeatedly and openly reaffirmed their support for Mrs. Aquino. Washington also reportedly brought pressure to bear on Enrile to cease his steady criticism of Mrs. Aquino.

As Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, John C. Monjo, had said to a U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on May 15, 1986, the Philippines under Mrs. Aquino faced "several formidable political tasks." Not least among these tasks were "working effectively with the sometimes competing political forces within her government" and "dealing constructively" with the supporters of the former Marcos regime. But, Monjo asserted, Aquino "enjoys broad popular support," and her accession to power "constitutes a setback" for the Communist insurgency. Citing Secretary of State George Shultz, Monjo added that he too felt certain that the Philippines' problems "are on the way to being solved."⁵² Less than three weeks later, however, in hearings before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defense, Richard Armitage, seemed more pessimistic. He declared, *inter alia*, that the Communist rebels had grown stronger and more violent since Mrs. Aquino's call for a cease-fire. He added that the Philippine army continued to be "handicapped by inadequate resources. The military situation is serious and getting worse."⁵³

Such contrasting assessments appeared to mirror the divisive con-

51. *The New Philippines Daily Express* (Manila), March 27, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, March 28, 1986, p. P12.

52. John C. Monjo, "US Assistance to the Philippines," *Current Policy*, no. 834 (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C., May 15, 1986), pp. 1-4.

53. *The Honolulu Advertiser*, June 4, 1986, p. 1, col. 2.

troversies within the Aquino regime, fed further by the sharper criticisms voiced by Enrile. A feeling that, despite good intentions, the Aquino regime was too internally divided and too weak to establish simultaneously effective government authority and take sustained national economic development in hand, was reflected in a persistent lack of business confidence in the Aquino regime, both on the part of U.S. and Filipino investors. The significance of the remark made by U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz on June 25, 1986, during a Manila visit, that he was "bullish about the Philippines," quickly was devaluated by the Philippines' own leading financial daily, *Business Day*. *Business Day* noted that, despite such assurances by Shultz, American foreign investors "do not share his view":

Members of the private sector recently invited to the US who met with ranking American officials and businessmen got the impression that American business is not ready to invest in the Philippines. "They always asked the bottom line question: Is President Aquino up to the job?" A leading corporate figure told *Business Day*: "They want to see progress first before they put in their money."⁵⁴

U.S. and other foreign investors were not the only ones to continue to entertain doubts about "the bottom line question." Filipino business circles also seemed to be skeptical. On June 4, 1986, in an address on the Philippine situation before the U.S. Foreign Policy Association in New York, Secretary of State Shultz had said that "We are beginning to see the first signs that the confidence of domestic investors is firming up," that the recession begun in 1983 was "bottoming out," and that "projections are for a resumption of positive growth" during the rest of 1986.⁵⁵ If Filipino domestic investors were showing new signs of confidence, however, Mrs. Aquino, for one, appeared to be unaware of it. On the contrary, on July 21, 1986, she castigated Filipino and foreign business leaders for their continuing "wait and see attitude," charging that the support they had pledged to her new administration "has not been forthcoming." It was noted in fact that, since the advent of President Aquino's Administration, "a hoped for upturn in business activity and investment has not materialized." Aquino told the business community flatly: "You complain of uncertainty, and I am telling you that it is uncertain because you are uncommitted," even though she claimed that the exchange rate had

54. *Business Day* (Quezon City), June 26, 1986, p. 28, col. 1.

55. George Shultz, "Reform in the Philippines and American Interests," *Current Policy*, no. 842, June 4, 1986, p. 4.

been stabilized, and inflation had been brought under control.⁵⁶

The ceaseless drumfire of debilitating charges of Enrile—ranging from his assertion that the government's peace talks with the Communist insurgents were futile and dangerous, and that Communists indeed had infiltrated the Aquino government, to a barely veiled accusation that Aquino's regime had fallen victim to corruption, and his demand that such ministers as Aquilino Pimentel be ousted from the cabinet⁵⁷—all aroused deep U.S. concern. Key members of the U.S. House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs warned late in October 1986 that if Enrile was not actually trying to overthrow Aquino, his criticisms and seeming defiance of government policy reportedly were "undermining the image of stability that the Philippines needs to attract foreign investment."⁵⁸ Earlier, on October 6, 1986, Under Secretary of State Michael H. Armacost felt it necessary to emphasize that "high purposes" were "beginning to demonstrate concrete and positive results," that Mrs. Aquino had "earned a mandate from the Philippine people," and that the Reagan Administration, along with its aid, was "actively encouraging" private "equity investment" in the Philippines.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, U.S. Ambassador in the Philippines, Stephen Bosworth, also asserted that the United States supported that Aquino government "completely and unequivocally," and that he wouldn't touch with "a ten foot pole" the question of whether the Reagan Administration would be equally supportive of a government headed by Enrile or Aquino's Vice President, Salvador Laurel. Laurel was another, if more restrained, critic of Aquino during this period.⁶⁰

Yet, even after the November 23, 1986 ministerial reshuffle and Enrile's departure from the cabinet, uneasiness over the Aquino government's future stability scarcely appeared to have dissipated, including in U.S. "equity investment" circles. For one thing, covert U.S. intervention in the Enrile-Aquino crisis probably did Mrs. Aquino's Presidency little good. According to a leading Manila daily, "highly placed" Philippine military sources had disclosed that days before a rumored coup attempt to topple Aquino on November 22, 1986, vet-

56. *The New York Times*, July 22, 1986, p. D13, col. 3.

57. See, e.g., Manila Far East Broadcasting Company Report, August 11, 1986, in FBIS, August 12, 1986, p. P7; *Business Day* (Manila), September 16, 1986, p. 20, in FBIS, September 17, 1986, p. P4; *The Manila Times*, October 30, 1986, pp. 1, 6.

58. *The New York Times*, October 28, 1986, p. 12.

59. Michael H. Armacost, "The Philippines and the United States," *Current Policy*, (U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.) n. 876, pp. 1-4.

60. *Los Angeles Times*, October 24, 1986, pt. 1, p. 1.

eran U.S. diplomat Philip Habib secretly was sent by the Reagan Administration to Manila to foil the rumored plot. Ambassador Bosworth similarly was criticized by the same Philippine circles for "manipulating and intervening" in Philippine domestic affairs.⁶¹ The continued evident approbation of Aquino in leading U.S. media and by the U.S. administration in Washington brought about a rare coalescing of the Left and the Right in nationalist Philippine reaction to such alleged U.S. influence in Philippine affairs.

Although for the time being, restive coup-minded elements in Enrile's Defense Ministry's security force had been effectively thwarted by Armed Forces Chief Ramos from proceeding further with plans to replace Aquino, their grievances against the regime remained. The chief result of the much publicized "mass" cabinet resignations on November 23 had been the removal of Enrile. To be sure, the heads of two other ministries, natural resources and public works, who also had been criticized by the military for their lacklustre performance, also were replaced. But, Aquilino Pimentel and Augusto Sanchez, the cabinet's leading leftists, whose removal reportedly had been urged by top Army generals, stayed on after Enrile left.

It was not until further pressure from the military and business supporters that Aquino, in mid-December 1986, agreed to Sanchez' resignation. Aquino, evidently, feared adverse reaction from more militant labor leaders with whom Sanchez in particular had been allied. She also seemed unwilling to antagonize her liberal supporters among whom human rights activist Pimentel was popular. Subsequent public and partisan controversy over Sanchez' replacement again indicated the deepening Left-Right polarization in the country.

Meanwhile, the much publicized 60-day cease-fire between the Communist insurgents and the Philippine armed forces, which went into effect on December 10, 1986, soon was marred by mutual recriminations and reciprocal charges of continuing violent clashes and reports of killings and ambushes. The Communist strategy of entering into cease-fire and peace talks with the Aquino government seemed to some observers to be actuated more by tactical considerations to provide a breathing space for the NPA guerrillas and by the opportunity for united front building of the party's mass base, rather than by an abandonment of its program of violent revolution.⁶² On December 28,

61. *The Manila Times*, November 26, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, November 26, 1986, p. P7.

62. See, e.g., Clayton Jones, "Filipino Left's Truce Strategy," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 1, 1986, pp. 1, 64. See also Justus M. van der Kroef, "Aquino and Beyond: Philippine Communist Strategies," *Internationales Asian Forum*, 1986, no. 3-4, pp. 215-234.

1986, Armed Forces Chief Fidel Ramos declared that on the basis of captured documents, the Communist party of the Philippines considered the cease-fire to be a means of advancing its activities in armed united front and parliamentary struggles. He singled out the newly formed *Partido ng Bayan* (People's Party) as part of these Communist tactics. Certainly, the party's National Democratic Front (NDF) threw itself with gusto into a propaganda campaign as its representatives appeared on TV talk shows, held frequent interviews, and even opened an "information office" in Manila's National Press Club building, a mile from the Presidential palace.

In the discussions between representatives of the Aquino government and the NDF, meanwhile, the latter's demands—an end to U.S. bases' rights and to "unequal" treaties with the United States, and sweeping agrarian and other economic reforms—hardly seemed calculated to reassure the business community, domestic or foreign. Various groups within the Armed Forces, including an organization calling itself "The Association of Young Lieutenants, Captains and Majors of the Armed Forces of the Philippines," openly criticized the government for its allegedly "hurriedly forcing" of a cease-fire with the Communists, "just for the heck of attaining peace."⁶³ Patterns of political violence, long endemic in the Philippines, also appeared to engulf foreign business and technical personnel in the country. On November 15, 1986, only two days after Aquino had returned from discussions in Tokyo designed to draw Japanese investment interest to the Philippines, a prominent Japanese businessman was abducted just outside Manila; three weeks earlier two South Korean engineers working in Ilocos Norte had been kidnapped, and the Communist New People's Army in the region in a possibly spurious letter demanded release of prominent NPA cadres in exchange. The murder of leftist labor leader Rolando Olalia on November 12, perhaps by a military-connected, "private army" death squad, was followed a week later by the NPA's admitted killing of David Puzon, a close associate of Enrile and a prominent political figure in Kalinga-Apayo.⁶⁴

Amidst all this violence, the impression that Aquino was and will be unable to rally a political "Center" broad and firm enough to hold both the Left and the Right at bay, and to sustain a national development program of some duration, was accentuated by disquieting pro-

63. *The New Philippines Daily Express*, December 4, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, December 5, 1986, p. P4.

64. See, e.g., *Radyo ng Bayan*, Quezon City, November 7, 1986, in FBIS, November 7, 1986, p. P13; *Ibid.*, November 21, 1986, in FBIS, November 25, 1986, p. P10; *The Boston Globe*, November 17, 1986, p. 3.

nouncements and policies of some of Aquino's ministers. Since Aquino's rise to power, there has been a marked upsurge in labor unrest, including strikes, in which the government, mindful of its left-wing constituency, has been unwilling or unable to intervene. The government's new wage order decision announced on May 1, 1986, consolidated all workers' allowances as part of basic wages. The measure was widely criticized as severely costly to them by the influential Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP). ECOP's spokesmen warned that the decision could lead to massive retrenchments and layoffs, particularly in export industries. They added that Aquino's allegedly pro-labor policies generally were viewed in the business community as an "act of ingratitude on the part of the President," considering the support which ECOP members had given her in her struggle against Marcos.⁶⁵ To be sure, later in 1986, the initially inflammatory rhetoric of Aquino's then Labor Minister, Augusto Sanchez, who in the early weeks of the new administration inveighed against "dirty capitalists" and "exploiters" and called for a new "equitable distribution of property and profit," was toned down. Indeed, as early as mid-August 1986, Aquino ordered the Labor Ministry to deal "more aggressively" with strikes, particularly those motivated by political considerations (e.g. in the Central Philippines, striking workers of one firm demanding the dismantling of U.S. bases in the country).⁶⁶ But concern that radical unions, such as those affiliated with the KMU or *Kilusang Mayo Uno* (May First Movement) labor association, continue to be infiltrated by the Communists, especially in the Metropolitan Manila area, had grown greatly by early 1987. Already in June 1986, former Defense Minister Enrile had warned of the "sustained infiltration of labor union ranks" by the Philippine Communists. Enrile noted that the Trade Union Bureau of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), whose insurgents continued to battle the Philippine armed forces and Constabulary despite Aquino's repeated call and efforts for a cease-fire, had stepped up its exploitation of labor-management conflicts. And he indicated to business groups that he was prepared to "identify" CPP labor fronts to business management groups on a confidential basis.⁶⁷ Since Enrile's departure from the cabinet, such revelations have ceased, and on this point alone

65. *The New Philippines Sunday Express* (Manila), May 4, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, May 12, 1986, p. P11.

66. *The Straits Times*, August 15, 1986, p. 8.

67. *The New Philippines Daily Express* (Manila), June 26, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, June 30, 1986, p. P7.

the Defense Minister's resignation may well turn out to have been a Pyrrhic political victory for Mrs. Aquino.

Still, behind all the partisan wrangling, policy divisions, and concerns over the economic climate in the country, there is perhaps a larger issue that is the root of the presently perceived instability. That issue is that a number of current institutions and organizations in the Philippines either were enabled to project their political power to a heretofore unexpected degree during the overthrow of Marcos and its aftermath, and/or have become directly more influential in shaping the future course of the nation. Four such contending power structures briefly will be considered here: (1) the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines; (2) the Armed Forces; (3) the CPP and its 16,000-man guerrilla force, the New People's Army (NPA); and, (4) the various armed bands, ranging from the Muslim secessionist Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) to the so-called "private armies" of political leaders. All four of these power structures impact on the future of the Aquino regime. Designing the formulas to accommodate, neutralize, and/or harness them to national Philippine development also is essential to the protection of U.S. security interests in the region.

III. THE CHURCH AND THE MILITARY

The Church—With little question, the February 7, 1986 Presidential election and the fall of Marcos, were high water marks in the politicization of Roman Catholicism in the Philippines, a Church to which some 80 percent of the country's 56 million inhabitants belong. The Vatican recognized this when on July 15, 1986, Pope John Paul II issued a strongly worded warning to the Bishops of the Philippines. The Pontiff expressed his misgivings about the Church's political activism, and cautioned the Bishops to limit their activities to "the disinterested service of the common good."⁶⁸ The Vatican's admonition was remarkable in that it was the first time in modern history that the Church's collective national leadership was taken to task. In the past, such warnings from the Holy See have been addressed to individual clergy.

During the early Marcos era, a number of bishops and younger clergy had voiced sharp criticism of the government, and some younger priests eventually joined the Communists' New People's Army. During the February 7, 1986 Presidential contest, clergy decisively intervened on behalf of Aquino's cause, and indeed, Jaime Car-

68. *The New York Times*, July 16, 1986, p. A8, col. 5.

dinal Sin played a major role in forging the Aquino-Laurel ticket at a time when it seemed that differences between the Laban and Unido parties would fatally split the opposition to Marcos. At least some 20 Filipino bishops led by Bishop Francisco Claver of Malaybatay, reportedly fell under the sway of "Liberation Theology." They have urged a dynamic of class struggle in the Philippines without formal reference to Marxism and they counsel Filipino farmers to oppose their landlord "oppressors." "Conscientisation" has been the term used by these clerical activists in seeking to bring their flocks to a militant political awareness.⁶⁹

All this, combined with the consistent exposure by various clergy, including the Association of Religious Superiors in the Philippines, of "salvagings" (i.e. disappearances) and other human rights violations allegedly committed by Philippine military elements and by para-military Integrated Civilian Home Defense Force units, sharpened the antagonism between many Philippine military commanders and the Church, leading to military countercharges of clerical "subversive" collaboration with the Communists. These acts also sharpened antagonism between the Church and the Marcos administration. During the 1986 Presidential election campaign, hundreds of clergy, informally or openly, propagated Aquino's cause or were alleged to have worked with the pro-Aquino Namfrel in the vote counting. There were many KBL charges of blatantly pro-Aquino pressure on voters by the clergy and activists of the Church. Marcos himself, on U.S. television, claimed that "we have pictures" showing Philippine clergy "intimidating and coercing people."⁷⁰ (One notes in passing that, while foreign media and election observers were quick to give credence to accusations of voting irregularities perpetrated by pro-Marcos supporters, there was a notable lack of interest in tracking down the veracity, if any, of these KBL-Marcos accusations.) Notwithstanding the questions that were raised about the accuracy of the Namfrel voting tabulation in the February 7 election, Cardinal Sin declared on February 11 that he had warned Marcos to stop attacking Namfrel, or he (Sin) would publicly denounce the President "as a liar."⁷¹

On February 14, 1986, a week after the Presidential election, the Philippine Bishops Conference issued a statement which condemned the violence and irregularities of the election, warning that if "the gov-

69. Ian Buruma, "The Church Militant Takes On a New Meaning," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 28, 1985, pp. 77-79.

70. *Times Journal* (Manila), February 16, 1981, p. 1, col. 3; *The New York Times*, February 15, 1986, p. 1, col. 6.

71. *The Straits Times* (Singapore), February 12, 1986, p. 6, col. 3. Cf. note 15 *supra*.

ernment does not freely correct these crimes against the body politic, then it is up to the people to speak for themselves.”⁷² Though the Bishops’ statement eschewed “violent” or “bloody means,” it was widely perceived as yet another pro-Aquino endorsement, and as virtually condoning in advance the largely peaceful *coup d’état* against Marcos. In the tense period between February 22 and 25, 1986, with Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and General Fidel Ramos openly defying Marcos, parish congregations in the Metropolitan Manila area were mobilized by sympathetic clergy. With priests and nuns dressed in clerical garb in the front ranks, the human wall of the “Miracle at EDSA” occurred. Meanwhile, the Catholic radio station “Veritas” was a major factor in rallying anti-Marcos public opinion in Manila.

Since the accession of Mrs. Aquino to the Presidency on February 25, 1986, and despite the Vatican’s criticism, the Church’s political influence has never been higher. This influence has begun to arouse a strong, if still relatively muted, resentment in various political circles, to a degree not seen in a country with little or no history of the anti-clericalism familiar to most of modern Catholic Europe or Latin America. The extent to which teachers and/or graduates of the premier Jesuit educational institution in the country, the Ateneo de Manila, have achieved political influence over the deeply devout Mrs. Aquino has led to unfavorable press reports. Such “Ateneans,” as Ateneo President and “Concom” member Joaquin Bernas, Finance Minister Jaime Ongpin, and Presidential Assistant Ching de Leon-Escalera, are described as constituting “a tightknit, powerful group,” jocularly known as Aquino’s “Council of Trent.”⁷³

One may dismiss such pejorative reports, perhaps, or similar *obiter dicta* by the media (e.g. the senior columnist Teodoro Valencia’s observation that “The only unity the priests want is unity between church and state . . . There are enough of them in the Constitutional Commission”).⁷⁴ But the spectacle of Cardinal Sin, during a Thanksgiving mass on March 2 in Manila’s Rizal Park, making the “L” sign of Aquino’s Laban party, and shouting “Cory! Cory!” to the assembled crowd of Aquino partisans, must give some pause to any observer of the present Filipino political scene. For Cardinal Sin these days to be called by Manila’s more exuberant inhabitants “the unseen general,” is not necessarily a guarantee of future political stability.⁷⁵

72. *Philippines Daily Express*, February 15, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, February 19, 1986, pp. P5-6.

73. *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (Manila), June 6, 1986, p. 5, col. 3.

74. *Philippines Daily Express*, June 5, 1986, p. 4, col. 4.

75. *The New York Times*, March 9, 1986, section 4, p. 1, col. 5.

Moreover, despite the Vatican's strictures on political activity by Roman Catholic clergy, the Philippine Church leadership seems as openly politicized today as ever. On November 21, 1986, for example, the Bishops Conference of the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines formally issued a statement supporting the newly drafted Constitution. This announcement was as the proposed new Charter became sharply controversial and came under a crossfire of attacks from such varied quarters as the Nacionalista Party, and other supporters of Enrile, peasant organizations, constitutional lawyers, the Communist Party of the Philippines and its allies such as the KMU labor federation, and the new *Partido ng Bayan* (People's Party). In their statement of support, the Bishops recognized that the new Constitution was "objectionable to some or many people." Still, they urged electoral approval, because the document, in their view, was "consistent with Catholic teachings."⁷⁶ Since some of the new Constitutional provisions, such as the government's power to "sequester," i.e. seize property, have been criticized as violative of the proposed new Charter's Bill of Rights by prominent Philippine Jesuit lawyers like Joaquin Bernas, a reputed close adviser of Mrs. Aquino and Concom member,⁷⁷ such pronouncements on the consistency between the Constitution and Church teachings only can add to the political controversy.

Church leaders' involvement in key Aquino government policies that are likely to be dubious threatens to draw the Church too far too into potentially disastrous outcomes of such policies. This, in turn, inevitably would weaken the Church's potential for future leadership in a new political crisis. An example is the Aquino government's truce negotiation with the Communists, which some Church leaders unequivocally has been endorsed. (Indeed, Bishop Antonio Fortich is Chairman of the National Ceasefire Commission or NCC, which monitors alleged truce violations.) Jaime Cardinal Sin expressed his own "strong conviction" that the December 10, 1986 government ceasefire agreement with the Communist insurgents "can and will hold."⁷⁸ The Cardinal spoke at a time when the truce already had been violated half a dozen times in various armed clashes and weapons incidents, and when concern over the Communists' tactics of consolidating their power during the truce period was mounting in military and political circles. Even those who sympathized with the Cardinal's exhortation that the truce was "our last chance" to avoid an eruption

76. Kyodo despatch, Manila, November 21, 1986, in FBIS, November 25, 1986, p. P12.

77. *Asiaweek*, October 26, 1986, p. 26.

78. *The New York Times*, December 6, 1986, p. 12.

of more bloody conflict in the future questioned whether some Philippine Church leaders were wise in believing, or pretending to believe, that the polarization of Left and Right in the Philippines had not already gone so far that its future dynamic could be halted or safely ignored.

By the end of the year, there were some signs that Cardinal Sin too was beginning to feel some pangs of disappointment over the Aquino regime's performance. In a sharply worded pastoral letter in early December 1986, the Cardinal inveighed against persistent corruption in society, declaring that its eradication "must start from the top: our leaders, starting with the President and her cabinet must show themselves to be examples of integrity." Aquino apparently visited Sin to get the details of the basis of his charges, but in her defense could only reply that it was not easy to overturn quickly the "bad habits" acquired during her predecessor.

Church leaders, clergy of all ranks, and the laity now are in a position similar to those commanders and their troops of the Philippine Armed Forces, with Enrile and Ramos in the lead, who successfully seized power during February 22-25, 1986. A potentially dangerous precedent was set for both Church and Army during "the miracle at EDSA." However, should the Church and/or the Army feel that circumstances dictate a repeat of earlier political intervention, will they then necessarily find themselves on the same side?

The prospect is troubling for at least two reasons. First, clerical involvement in Philippine political affairs in recent years has not necessarily been peaceful. More than a dozen Philippine Roman Catholic clergy joined and have fought with the Communists' New People's Army. In September 1985, one priest who had joined the NPA, Father Nilo Valerio, was killed, along with three fellow NPA insurgents in a shoot-out in Davao.⁷⁹ Then, too, the accession of Mrs. Aquino has not necessarily changed the views of NPA clerics. The well-known Reverend Conrado Balweg, onetime NPA activist, after first indicating that he was ready to make his peace with the Aquino regime, now leads a new guerrilla resistance group, together with an ex-seminarian named Mailed Molina.⁸⁰ The group is made up of some of Balweg's NPA followers among the Luzon hill tribes and is called the "Cordilera People's Liberation Army." There are claims that the group has broken with the NPA and now is dedicating itself, in militant fashion, to the problems of the hill tribe people of Northern Luzon, including

79. Far East Broadcasting Company Report, Manila, September 5, 1985, p. P5.

80. *We Forum* (Quezon City), June 17-23, 1986, p. 5, in FBIS, July 2, 1986, p. P5.

their demands for greater autonomy. Meanwhile, Balweg has been holding "reconciliation" talks with the CPP leadership. In the author's opinion, admiration for this charismatic revolutionary among younger Filipino clergy today remains considerable.

Second, Enrile, before and after his departure from the cabinet, as well as his Armed Forces associates, clearly have aligned themselves with those—including military and business elements—who are opposed either to any accommodation with the CPP, or to an abandonment of the U.S. military bases. This group also is less than enthusiastic toward the more sweeping social reform legislation that continues to resonate favorably in various, particularly younger, clerical segments of the Philippine Catholic Church. In short, the dynamic of polarization at work in the present Philippine political scene is likely to force the Church's more enthusiastic Aquino supporters into confronting some agonizing future choices.

The Military—About 500 to 600 members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), among them five generals, joined Marcos' running mate, Arturo Tolentino, in his brief coup attempt at the Manila Hotel on July 6, 1986. Enrile, over strident opposition of fellow cabinet members—and after "staking his name, honor and office"—saw to it that no formal disciplinary action was taken against the coup participants.⁸¹ Although in July, 1986, and again in February, 1987 all officers of the Philippine Armed Forces took a loyalty oath to the nation's new constitutions, there are few Filipinos today who believe that the AFP now decisively has turned its back on future political ventures.

Marcos' fall, after all, was a turning point in Philippine life, not least because it was the first time in the Republic's national history that a coup-like military initiative brought about a change of government. This hardly was the start of the politicization of the AFP, however. For years, Marcos had used a *tayo-tayo* ("crony") system to place his favorites in key command positions. Indeed, among the reasons subsequently given by General Ramos for joining Enrile against Marcos was that "cronyism" had become so rife in the AFP that it was seriously undermining the military's efficiency, particularly in confronting the Communist insurgency.⁸² In November 1985, Ramos publicly berated the AFP for laxity and unprofessional conduct, which he said was causing needless casualties in the fight against the Com-

81. *The Manila Chronicle*, July 9, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, July 10, 1986, p. P7.

82. *Asiaweek* (Hongkong), March 9, 1986, p. 30, and Radio Veritas, Manila, February 22, 1986, in FBIS, February 24, 1986, p. P8.

munist guerrillas.⁸³

Ramos was not alone in his criticisms: reform-minded "Young Turks" among the AFP's field and subaltern grade officers began to coalesce even before the 1984 *Batasang* election campaign as new opposition groups reached out to them and to other interest groups. A "clean election drive campaign," called *Kamalayan '86*, which began among a few officers, joined other reform-minded officers committed to exerting quiet pressure for a variety of perceived needs, among them retirement of "overstaying" (i.e. overage) generals, improvement in logistical support services, particularly field communications in counter-insurgency campaigns, promotions based on merit, and tighter discipline and training procedures. Initially shunning the limelight in order to preserve at least the appearance of the tradition of a "non-politicized" AFP, most of the "Young Turk" officers during 1985-1986 eventually affiliated with a loose coordinating body called RAM (generally taken to mean as standing for "Reform the Armed Forces Movement").

The advent of the Aquino era did not mean a dissolution of RAM or its ephemeral satellites. Nor did it discourage the emergence of other internal AFP "fraternal" cliques. On the contrary, as basic RAM differences with Aquino's policies emerged, they seemed to encourage further "Young Turk" activity. As Aquino attempted to seek a peaceful rapprochement with the Communists, pursuing talks with the CPP, and the possibility of a cease-fire and even of an amnesty for the NPA, the RAM publicly expressed doubts. In one press interview, a RAM spokesman sharply attacked NPA leaders, charging that, while the Communists talked about the desirability of a "power sharing" arrangement with the Aquino government, NPA guerrillas refused to lay down their arms and forego violence. RAM not only accused the NPA of being responsible for numerous new atrocities, but of trying to "gain strategic positioning in the rural areas." Meanwhile, other internal interest and support groups increasingly emerged within the AFP. Some reserve officers, united in a group calling itself "The Brothers," denied it embraced Marcos loyalists. Another interest group, dating from the early 1970s, and called "El Diablo," recently has reemerged under the name "The Guardians." The political leanings of these and other internal groups is not known. To an extent, they appear to be "mutual-protection" societies, intent on promoting the careers of their respective members. However, one Philippine academic who has been studying their rise observed that

83. *The Straits Times*, November 8, 1985, p. 9, col. 4.

the emergence of the military cliques betokens a sense of drift and loss of effective central leadership in the AFP. The result is a search for new "rallying figures."⁸⁴

An ambitious Enrile seems ready to become such a rallying figure. RAM's relationship with Enrile on the basic policy question of seeking an accommodation with the CPP-NPA is particularly noteworthy. At first, after Aquino came to power, Enrile had said that he expected RAM to disband because "what they are asking for is being implemented."⁸⁵ But when RAM, though generally keeping a low profile, did not break up and, as indicated, publicly voiced concern over government policy, there were no indications that the Defense Minister had any intention to order its dissolution, or even that he was uncomfortable with a politico-military action group within his own command. Indeed, even more than RAM, Enrile, known to have opposed Aquino's granting amnesty to CPP founding chairman Jose N. Sison, also has been persistently critical of the attempt to reach a rapprochement with the Communists, warning frequently that they are continuing to spread their influence. At the very time that the Aquino government was beginning its initial peace discussions with CPP-NPA emissaries, Enrile was warning that the CPP "has successfully infiltrated various national government offices" in an attempt to "destabilize" the Aquino administration. CPP strategy, Enrile said, was to bore from within, by placing its agents in such strategic industries as communications, energy, transportation and banking.⁸⁶ A month later, at the height of the Tolentino coup fiasco in the Manila Hotel, Enrile asserted that Tolentino's actions should not distract Filipinos from the "more important problem of insurgency." Enrile emphasized that the Communists were taking advantage of the Aquino administration's reconciliation strategy and of the "atmosphere of liberalism prevailing in the land."⁸⁷ This was a theme that he was to reiterate in later months, and carry into his January 1987 campaign against the new Constitution.

The resignation of Enrile in the Cabinet change of November 23, 1986 and the concurrent reputed failure of a coup plot by pro-Enrile officers in RAM and in the Defense Ministry's security force did not end the problems of the politicization process in the Armed Forces.

84. *Business Day* (Manila), June 30, 1986, p. 20, col. 1. On the military cliques, see especially *Business Day*, July 29, 1986, p. 5, in FBIS, August 7, 1986, p. P7.

85. Agence France Presse despatch, Manila, March 10, 1986, in FBIS, March 11, 1986, p. P15.

86. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, June 6, 1986, p. 1, col. 3.

87. *The Manila Chronicle*, July 9, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, July 10, 1986, p. P7.

To be sure, the effective intervention of Ramos, and Enrile's replacement by Lt. Gen. Rafael Ileteo, reaffirmed the principle of non-political professionalism in the Armed Forces position. But RAM's stalwarts and Enrile's supporters in the officers corps—though some have been reassigned and “neutralized” in new staff positions—hardly are a spent force. On December 16, 1986, metropolitan Manila's daily *Business Day* reported concern within the army over a reportedly clandestine intelligence group in the military, called the “Cory Information Network” (CIN). Reportedly, CIN is to be the intelligence arm, gathering information inside the armed forces, for a clandestine “Yellow Army.” The latter is a 3,000-man, pro-Aquino protective force being developed under the guidance of Israeli instructors. Such developments, if true, do not suggest a stable, non-political armed forces establishment. The question of just what national political format the Armed Forces are to be fitted into remains, as does the dissatisfaction within the officers' corps with Aquino's persistence in seeking a rapprochement with the Communists.

The latter, inevitably, is a political issue. And, as recent analyses again have emphasized, preservation of domestic security—including the waging of effective counter insurgency—historically has been a major, perhaps principal, preoccupation of the Philippine military establishment.⁸⁸ Even the most professional and least politicized elements of the officers corps are alarmed over whether, in the absence of adequate equipment, training and morale, the Philippine military establishment can discharge its major domestic security obligation. Indeed, in early October 1986, one senior Defense Ministry official, openly expecting the collapse of peace discussions with the Communists, warned that, given the poor state of their equipment and morale, the Philippine Armed Forces would be incapable of winning the war against the insurgents.⁸⁹

Hard on the heels of Enrile's departure from the cabinet, Aquino on December 2, 1986, signed a number of Executive Orders, restoring tax-free privileges to the members of Armed Forces at commissaries and other benefits, and providing a greater role for reserve officers in military selection boards. More than these gestures will be needed, however, to reconcile the restive RAM and other dissident officers with the Aquino regime. In early January 1987, as Aquino began campaigning for popular ratification of the new Constitution, Enrile took to the political hustings against her—and against the new Char-

88. *Ibid.*, November 23, 1986, p. 7, in FBIS, December 5, 1986, p. P5.

89. *The Manila Times*, October 3, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, October 6, 1986, p. P7.

ter—railing against the “new dictatorship” that he claimed now had emerged in the wake of the revolution against Marcos. In this campaign, Enrile made his debut as an independent political alternative to Aquino—and to the notion of compromise with the NPA or NDF. A memorandum, submitted by Ramos on behalf of senior military commanders to Aquino on November 15, 1986, and containing recommendations on prosecuting the struggle against the Communists more effectively, bears the stamp of Enrile’s political perception. If nothing else, the January 1987 campaign contesting Aquino’s endorsement of the new Constitution makes this memorandum virtually a basis for the emerging Right’s policy posture in subsequent months. In the meantime, the hard statistics of the Philippine Communist insurgency underscored that posture. Between February 24 and September 24, 1986, according to Philippine Armed Forces sources, “at least” 1,918 persons, including 513 civilians were killed. The remainder of the dead were primarily Philippine military and NPA insurgents.⁹⁰

Earlier, Enrile had warned of new Communist infiltration in the trade unions. As Defense Minister he also had attempted to protect the military from serious charges of human rights violations now being investigated by the Aquino government-appointed Commission on Human Rights. He also was critical of the dismissal of hundreds of pro-Marcos local government officials and their replacement by pro-Aquino “Officers in Charge.” While her press supporters berated all such Enrile “defiance,” and within days of her accession to the presidency urged Aquino to give her Defense Minister “another job,”⁹¹ Enrile himself missed few opportunities to wide his own constituency. For example, in the face of the Reverend Conrado Balweg’s new leadership role among the Luzon hill tribes, Enrile announced his own support for an “autonomous” government among the rebellious tribes of the Cordillera mountains.⁹²

Another conflict between Aquino’s and Enrile’s perceptions and policies also emerged quickly over the future of the U.S. military bases and installations in the Philippines. Aquino has said that she will not disturb the present U.S.-Filipino lease agreement and would keep her “options open” until its 1991 expiration. The new Constitution provides, if necessary, for a plebiscite referendum on the matter. But powerful voices were heard in the deliberations of the “Concom” and elsewhere to make such foreign bases in the Philippines unconstitu-

90. *Business Day*, October 1, 1986, p. 16, in FBIS, October 2, 1986, p. P5.

91. *Ang Pahayagang Malaya*, March 19, 1986, p. 4, in FBIS, March 28, 1986, p. P17.

92. Agence France Presse despatch, Manila, May 13, 1986, in FBIS, May 13, 1986, p. P2. Cf. note 80 *supra*.

tional. As a result, Aquino herself seemed to lean toward shutting down all U.S. military facilities in her country. Though she frequently reiterated that she would not foreclose her choices (“Because, who am I to say what will happen in the next year, or two years, or three years?”), she also declared in a July 1986 interview that she did not believe the Philippines would face an external threat if the U.S. bases were removed from Philippine soil.⁹³ Among her supporters, especially on the Left, and in Manila’s volatile student and professional circles, the U.S. bases and Philippine dependence on the United States generally long has been anathema.

Enrile also made his views clear. On March 30, 1986, he reportedly told visiting Japanese parliamentarians that he favored retention of U.S. bases in the Philippines beyond 1991.⁹⁴ And by mid-June he reiterated that “no matter how unpleasant the reality may be, whether we like it or not, these military bases in the Philippines will be with us far beyond this administration.”⁹⁵

Perhaps Aquino felt that, by being noncommittal on the future of the bases and leaving the issue to national legislative decision or, if necessary, to a plebiscite under the new Constitution, a polarization on the issue can be avoided. Yet, precisely because of Enrile’s unequivocal stand, the matter was quickly polarized, and Mrs. Aquino’s own policy has been pleasing neither to the advocates nor the opponents of a future U.S. military presence. Certainly, key senior military commanders, in testimony before the “Concom” hearings and elsewhere, have made it plain that they are against any provision barring foreign bases from Philippine soil.⁹⁶

This is not to say that Enrile had all of the AFP behind him on all issues. For example, Aquino had her own group of backers in the officers corps, led from the beginning by Enrile’s eventual successor, General Rafael Ilete, a former Assistant AFP staff chief and Enrile’s Deputy Defense Minister. This position made it possible to watch Enrile closely. Also, by swiftly retiring some 20 allegedly “overstaying” generals, whose terms had been extended by Marcos, Aquino found favor among younger officers. On the other hand, a third AFP faction—that of the now quietly covert, but still pro-Marcos loyalists—increasingly cast its lot with Enrile. It was significant that during his

93. In an interview with Clayton Jones, *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 25, 1986, p. 1, col. 1.

94. Kyodo despatch, Manila, March 31, 1986, in FBIS, March 31, 1986, p. P9.

95. PNA despatch, Manila, June 19, 1986, in FBIS, June 19, 1986, p. P7.

96. Far East Broadcasting Company newscast, Manila, July 4, 1986, in FBIS, July 9, 1986, p. P5.

brief July 6-8 1986 coup attempt, Arturo Tolentino, after having proclaimed himself Acting President, appointed Enrile to his cabinet as Defense Minister—an appointment the latter quickly declined.

Enrile's protection against any retribution against the pro-Marcos military who had sided with Tolentino placed these military elements under an "obligation of honor" to Enrile, as one dissident general put it. It certainly further strengthened the perception among many of the regular pro-Marcos demonstrators and activists in Manila with whom this author talked in July 1986 and subsequent months that Enrile essentially was on their side. It also fed speculation that Enrile knew days in advance of the planned Tolentino coup but did nothing to stop it, or even warn Aquino. What became abundantly apparent from Enrile's various statements and policies since his unexpected February 22, 1986 rebellion against Marcos is that the Defense Minister was trying to develop a broad consensus of popular support, to allow him eventually to float upward in fulfillment of his often discussed Presidential ambitions. Though he has rejected thus far formal party affiliation, he began building his own organizational political base through the revival of the old Nacionalista party, now led by some of his allies in the business and professional communities.⁹⁷ It is well to stress that his ties with those communities are close. The 62-year-old Harvard Law-educated Enrile began his career as a tax specialist and corporate lawyer, later becoming Insurance and Customs Commissioner and Chairman of the Philippine National Bank, before entering the National Defense Ministry in 1970.

On the other hand, though it may be the chief source of strength for his present political standing, the AFP also is the reef upon which Enrile's prestige and aspirations may run aground. The Philippines' total regular military force in its Southeast Asian environment is considered comparatively small in size (about 113,000); Malaysia, with a population less than a third that of the Philippines, has a regular military force almost as large (110,000), while Thailand, with a population less than that of the Philippines, maintains a much larger force (more than 256,000).⁹⁸ Planned infusions of U.S. military assistance (e.g. over \$100 million for Fiscal Year 1986 alone) do not begin to address the AFP's grave problems of logistical modernization and need for improved counterinsurgency tactics. Already in mid-1985, as the NPA was striking ever more widely, boldly, and with company-sized

97. *Asiaweek* (Hongkong), July 13, 1986, p. 13.

98. *The Military Balance 1986-1987* (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1986), pp. 162, 166, and 170.

combat units against the AFP and “home defense” auxiliaries, Enrile had warned that “it would take 10 years and billions of Pesos to stop the Communist rebellion.”⁹⁹

Having committed itself so unequivocally to the Aquino Presidency, the Reagan Administration undoubtedly viewed Enrile as an embarrassment. On November 1, 1986, the U.S. press reported that the U.S. Justice Department was “investigating” whether Enrile and his wife illegally had diverted funds to acquire real estate holdings in San Francisco.¹⁰⁰ The report was widely disseminated. To the author’s knowledge, no mention was made in the U.S. media of the statement made shortly afterwards by a member of Aquino’s special Good Government Commission, charged with investigating ill-gotten wealth by Philippine government officials, that the Commission had no evidence of any unlawful diversion of funds by Enrile.¹⁰¹

IV. THE COMMUNISTS AND THE PRIVATE ARMIES

The Communists—There are two Communist Parties in the Philippines. The oldest, smallest (about 1500 formal members) and least influential is the *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas* (PKP), formally established on November 7, 1930.¹⁰² Originally outlawed by Republic Act 1700 in 1957 toward the end of the post-World War II guerrilla insurgency in the Philippines, the PKP struck a “national unity” agreement with Marcos, in October 1974, which, together with his Presidential Decision (PD) 885 two years later, conferred a quasi-legal status on the party so long as it desisted from violence or submission to foreign “subversive” influence. After Aquino acceded to the Philippine Presidency, the PKP declared that “we did not vote for you” because it considered Aquino to have been little different from the “International Monetary Fund-dictated program” of Marcos.¹⁰³ Though it did not urge a boycott of the February 7, 1986 Presidential election, the PKP made it clear that it regarded the poll as meaningless. But PKP Secretary General Felicisimo Macapagal, in an open letter to Aquino, also insisted that he PKP considers itself “a legal organization,” and, as such, entitled to conduct its activities freely like all other

99. *The Straits Times*, June 22, 1985, p. 8, col. 8.

100. *The San Jose Mercury News*, November 1, 1986, p. 1; *The New York Times*, November 2, 1986, p. 5.

101. Kyodo despatch, Manila, November 4, 1986, in FBIS, November 4, 1986, p. P4.

102. On the development and objectives of Philippine Communism, see Justus M. van der Kroef, *Communism in Southeast Asia* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1980).

103. As published in the *Morning Star* (London), May 9, 1986, p. 4, col. 1.

political parties.¹⁰⁴

The PKP pronouncements that periodically appear in the pages of the Prague-based *World Marxist Review* are important primarily as a potential conduit of Soviet bloc influence in the Philippines. They are of little or no account in Aquino's policy perceptions. Moreover, they probably have little or no impact on the Philippines generally, unless another Philippine government seeks to commit itself to a more "neutralist" or Moscow-oriented accommodationist policy.

Far more influential and menacing to Aquino and her successors is the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its loose alliance of labor, student, farmers and other front and collateral interest groups called the National Democratic Front (NDF), and, more particularly, its guerrilla force, the New People's Army (NPA). Founded on December 26, 1968 on Mao Zedong's seventy-fifth birthday, the CPP's original Constitution stressed the importance of Maoist thought. Indeed, that Constitution indicated (article 1, section 1) that, for purposes of concise identification, the CPP would either append "Marxist-Leninist" (ML) to its name, or add the words "Mao Tse-tung's thought" parenthetically.¹⁰⁵ Since the second half of the 1970s, however, and the turbulence following Mao's death and "the Gang of Four" in China itself, the CPP has carried on a kind of "de-Maoization" of its own by emphasizing its *national* Philippine character in its history, tactics and objectives.

Popular estimates put the NPA's strength as high as 20,000 members. More authoritative estimates settle at about 16,000, adding that about a third of the country's 41,400 barangays (the country's lowest units of government) are reported to have a CPP political organization of some sort and that 12 percent of the barangays are considered to be under CPP control.¹⁰⁶ The CPP-NPA operates in every one of the country's 73 provinces and its power has been especially evident among the rural populations on the island of Samar, Negros, Catanduanes and parts of Mindanao (including the city of Davao).

Voicing alarm over the advent of CPP-NPA power has been *de rigueur* in recent years. On October 30, 1985, U.S. Assistant Secretary

104. *Veritas (Manila)*, June 9-11, 1986, p. 22, col. 2.

105. For the original CPP Constitution, see *The Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines*, Southeast Asia Treaty Organization Short Paper no. 52 (Bangkok, The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, 1971), p. 44.

106. *Insurgency and Counter Insurgency in the Philippines*. Prepared for the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate by the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1985), p. 2.

of Defense Richard Armitage warned the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the NPA could achieve a "strategic stalemate" with the AFP "within three to five years"—a time period estimate that the NPA said it had made early in 1985, but which by February 1986, the NPA believed had been shortened in view of the expected turmoil surrounding and following the Presidential elections.¹⁰⁷ As was indicated earlier, the perception among U.S. observers in 1985 appeared to grow that, because of Marcos' political repression and corruption, the growing poverty among a burgeoning population, and the intimidating brutality and violence of NPA tactics against local government officials and military (a brutality which some observers likened to the infamous Khmer Rouge in Cambodia), the Communists were steadily becoming a greater danger.¹⁰⁸

The rise of Aquino—though it precipitated a crisis in CPP tactics and leadership—did not mean any reduction in the level of NPA violence. Though statistical evidence is not altogether certain, there was an "increase in rebel activities after the February revolution" (i.e. Marcos' fall).¹⁰⁹ There also were disturbing reports, based on interviews with CPP and NPA leaders, that Communist insurgent units in various parts of the country planned to continue their armed "protracted struggle" against the government.¹¹⁰ In any case, party leaders and cadres appeared unconvinced that they could gain any advantage from the December 10, 1986 truce and subsequent peace negotiations with the Aquino government. The principal benefit to the CPP of the Aquino peace overtures was purely tactical: the lull in fighting and restraints imposed on Army counterinsurgency activity (the NPA bands have felt little restraint) afforded the Communists a "democratic space," in their leaders' parlance, during which party power can be consolidated in the *barangays*. Mounting numbers of allegations both by the Army and the NPA that the truce has been violated by the other side are being examined by a previously mentioned National

107. Cf. *The Wall Street Journal*, October 31, 1985, p. 37, col. 6; Teodoro Benigno's Agence France Presse despatch, Manila, February 7, 1986, in FBIS, February 12, 1986, p. P26.

108. See also Paul D. Wolfowitz, "Developments in the Philippines," *Current Policy* (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.), no. 760, (October 30, 1985), pp. 1-4; Ross H. Munro, "The New Khmer Rouge," *Commentary* (New York), December 1985, pp. 19-38. Cf. notes 7 and 8 *supra*.

109. C.L. Macapagal, "Who's Really Winning the War?" *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (Manila), June 12, 1986, p. 22, col. 3.

110. See, e.g., in Agence France Presse despatch, Iloilo, the Philippines, March 12, 1986, in FBIS, March 12, 1986, p. P19; *Business Day*, April 16, 1986, p. 23, in FBIS, April 18, 1986, p. P19.

Cease Fire Committee (NCC). The NCC's periodic findings—including dismissal of some Army charges that the NPA violated the truce—have heightened the antagonisms and controversy over the whole issue of a peace negotiation process between the government and the insurgents.

Nevertheless, some party leaders express their determination to hold peace talks with Aquino's representatives. Others early voiced skepticism that such discussions would bear any fruit.¹¹¹ Almost daily the Philippine press reports on NPA ambushes or other clashes with the AFP, or carries news items on "executions" carried out by Communist death squads, such as the following:

Communist led People's Army (NPA) liquidation units have executed a total of 17 persons with 'blood debts' to the people in the metropolitan Cebu area and Cebu's hinterlands this year, according to the latest issue of 'Pakigbisog' (Struggle), a Cebu based underground Communist newspaper. The paper also reported that from last year to March this year more than 45 counter-revolutionaries and other bad elements were meted death penalties by the NPA.¹¹²

Meanwhile, there are other reports that NPA leaders in Panay "are already raring to launch a propaganda campaign against the rising 'US-Cory' dictatorship," and that an NPA spokesman in Bataan describes the Aquino government "as shaky" and likely to "crumble any time," or that the AFP Regional Commander in the Bicol region has disclosed documents indicating that the NPA insurgents in that area are planning attacks on government officials and the military in order to "stalemate" any planned CPP-Government peace talks.¹¹³ In the author's calculations, from Aquino's accession to power on February 25, 1986 to the middle of December 1986, at least 1000 Philippine military and civilians died in clashes with NPA units, or at the hands of NPA execution (so-called "Sparrow") squads. Indeed, since Aquino, some NPA attacks have been noteworthy for their size and careful tactical preparation. This was the case in the spectacular NPA ambush of an AFP unit on April 18, 1986 on Oas, Albay province, in which more than 100 NPA guerrillas participated and 22 Philippine military were killed.

111. *The New York Times*, March 15, 1986, p. 1, col. 2; *The Manila Times*, June 12, 1986, p. 1, col. 3.

112. *The News Herald* (Manila), June 10, 1986, p. 3, col. 3.

113. *Ang Pahayagang Malaya* (Manila), June 5, 1986, p. 14, col. 1; June 10, 1986, p. 10, col. 1; June 11, 1986, p. 14, col. 1.

What characterized the actual, "in the field" posture of the NPA during the shaky truce period that started on December 10, 1986, was the retention and even the flaunting of the weapons held by the insurgents—as if to impress on the population that the guerrillas were invulnerable. Clearly what the NPA and party have been seeking is recognition as a *de facto* countergovernment, that must somehow be accommodated in any peace settlement with the Aquino regime. Already in June 1986, the NPA insisted that the Philippine Armed Forces withdraw from "our territories."¹¹⁴ What the party has been asking is tantamount to the surrender of the Philippine countryside to the NPA, and the reference to "our territories," suggests an NPA concept of a Communist "liberated zone" and an existing state within a state. Indeed, in its initial, December 23, 1986 proposal for an agenda of peace talks with the government, the NDF sought a "transitional coalition government" for the Philippines in which the Communists would be represented along with other parties. The coalition concept has been sharply rejected by Aquino, but, clearly, the CPP intends to persist. Meanwhile, the party and the NPA intend to remain a fighting force. The NPA, CPP founding chairman José M. Sison, declared as early as mid-April 1986, that he "will never surrender" to the Aquino government, because the NPA has made so many sacrifices that "they will not give up their arms."¹¹⁵

The United States, prudently allowing for peace talks with the CPP to reach some sort of conclusion, thus far has been reluctant to comment on the obvious persistence of the Communist threat—a threat which, as we have seen, only a few months earlier had prompted official American expressions of alarm. Indeed, when U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz visited Manila in June 1986, he was told in reportedly "blunt" terms by Enrile and Armed Forces Chief Ramos that they had "no illusions" that government offers of peace talks would end the Communist rebellion: "it is a possibility only if we are talking about a miracle," Enrile told Shultz. However, the peace talk offer, Filipino leaders felt, perhaps could bring a few of the less-avowed Marxist insurgents "down from the hills," and, in any case, would be considered a gesture of reconciliation. According to these Filipino leaders, such a gesture had to be extended to the CPP in order to show that the government had gone "the extra mile," and that the Communists would be responsible for any continuing bloodshed.¹¹⁶

114. *The Sunday Chronicle* (Manila), June 15, 1986, p. 1, col. 2.

115. *The Straits Times*, April 12, 1986, p. 7, col. 1.

116. *The New York Times*, June 26, 1986, p. A12, col. 1-4.

The U.S. reaction to all this was a curious one. Various government reconciliation programs during the Marcos years also periodically had brought insurgents "down from the hills." But, nevertheless, the level of fighting not only increased in the same period, but during the early 1980s, the CPP generally had come to be perceived as more of a threat, as *vide*, earlier noted US expressions of alarm. Yet, on being told during his June 1986 discussions in Manila that new peace talks would not slacken the Communist resistance, Shultz nevertheless felt able at that time to come out with his well-known remark that "I am bullish about the Philippines." The basis for this newly optimistic assessment clearly, then, was not that the violent Communist resistance was going to end. Rather, the optimism seems to have been based on what Shultz, after his June 1986 Manila discussions, declared to be enhanced Philippine understanding of "the need for political change" and for an "opening" to "democracy," as well as an improved economic development. Shultz even drew parallels between Aquino's policies with the reforms instituted by the Duarte regime in El Salvador.¹¹⁷

The Secretary seemed off the mark. The Salvadoran case demonstrates, if anything, that even with "political change" and enhanced "democracy" the Communist threat continues to loom large, certainly in that Central American country. And where in Southeast Asia in the immediate decade after World War II was there a greater opportunity for "political change" and for an "opening" to "democracy" than in the Philippines? Yet, the Communist Huk insurgency rose to its greatest danger in those very years. How swiftly, today, economic development anticipated under Aquino will provide new stability for the Philippines is anyone's guess. But as for "political change" since Aquino, it, as we have seen, has been a source of considerable uncertainty and division within the new Filipino government. And it is precisely that persistent Communist issue that is polarizing perceptions of needed "political change" and of the kind of leadership that the country requires. Having decried the inadequacies of the Marcos regime, and in various ways having assisted in Mr. Marcos' departure, the Reagan Administration understandably wishes to put as positive a patina on the regime of Marcos' successor. One can only hope, however, that Shultz' remark "I am bullish about the Philippines" will not come to haunt the United States as did the praise voiced by U.S. Vice President George Bush while attending the inauguration of the then newly-re-elected President Marcos in Manila in June 1981: "We love your

117. *Ibid.*

adherence to democratic processes.”¹¹⁸

Fortunately for Shultz and the United States—and as was the case with the Communist Huk problem in the 1950s—Philippine Communism is likely less to be vitiated by dubious “political change,” or programs of economic development, and more by many persistent structural and leadership problems within the CPP-NPA. The scattered, wholly archipelagic character of the Philippines, the difficulties of terrain and communication, the resulting problems of establishing closer tactical coordination and consistent ideological training and discipline among the often widely dispersed NPA units and CPP cells long have been major and insurmountable obstacles to forging the CPP into an effective organizational weapon.

Divided into six “territorial commissions” (Northern Luzon, Central Luzon, Southern Luzon, the Visayas, Mindanao and Metropolitan Manila), each with their own party command structure, and supervised by four “national commissions” (military affairs, propaganda, united front building, and mass movement organizations), as well as by a Politburo and Central Committee, the CPP is top-heavy with localized and often jealous leaders. Hence, coordination among the party’s three chief tactical concerns—rural insurgency, agitation, and united front building in the cities—has suffered.¹¹⁹

An even more serious liability is an environment of opportunistic appeal to join various armed bands ranging from ill-disciplined paramilitary “home defense” forces and so-called “private armies” of warlord-like rural business tycoons, landowners or political bosses, to “liberation” fronts of Muslim secessionists seeking an independent state in Mindanao, and anti-Communist Christian charismatic armed cults. These bands readily draw on the abundant human jetsam of a permanently floating underclass, rife with unemployment, banditry and racketeering, in one of Asia’s poorest nations. Much of the Communist guerrilla force consists of such elements, who easily drift from one gang to another, dependent on available opportunity, lending little credibility to a picture of a well-organized Communist threat. It has been reliably estimated that, of the often reported 18,000- to 20,000-man NPA force, “the true figure of trained gun-carrying fighters” may be no more than 2,000.¹²⁰ This number is large enough to wreak some havoc, to be sure. Moreover, the importance of the impoverishment and discontent in much of the Philippine countryside, or of the CPP’s

118. *Asia 1982 Yearbook* (Far Eastern Economic Review, Hongkong, 1982), p. 225.

119. On CPP organization see, e.g., *Manila Bulletin*, December 5, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, December 8, 1986, p. P7.

120. *The Economist* (London), April 26, 1986, p. 44.

attempts at ideological indoctrination of exploited tenants and estate workers in village “night classes” and “people’s courses” should not be underestimated. Even so, it does appear that the CPP-NPA still is a long way off from being able to overthrow any Filipino government, because of the lack of total force and/or tactical training and inefficiency of its numbers.

To these organizational weaknesses of the CPP now must also be added a serious rift in the highest leadership circles of the party, which erupted in the aftermath of Aquino’s accession to the Presidency. After 1977 and the capture by Marcos government forces of CPP founding chairman José Sison and some of his chief lieutenants, party control fell mainly into the hands of Rodolfo Salas (alias “Kumander Bilog”). Salas’ tactics of organizational decentralization, coupled with a sharp intensification of local guerrilla violence and brutal executions of “anti-people” (i.e. Philippine officials and military), had several effects. It opened paths to prominence for local cadres, and at the same time it imparted an aura of stepped-up, uncompromising and unrelenting CPP-NPA activity, deeply intimidating local village populations. Finally, it impressed some foreign observers, who were little inclined to scrutinize the organizational weaknesses of the NPA, with the seemingly new power of Philippine Communism.

The CPP’s violent new hard-line also set the stage for a leadership rift, however. It was Salas’ position to boycott the February 7 Presidential election, which the party, under his direction, called “a sham” and a “meaningless but noisy electoral contest between local reactionaries.”¹²¹ However, the surprising outpouring of sympathy for Aquino, backed by the Church, and followed by the successful Enrile-Ramos coup and the “miracle at EDSA,” all left other party leaders feeling that a major and potentially revolutionary dynamic in Philippine politics had passed the party by. During April and May 1986 CPP Politburo and Central Committee meetings, it came to a crisis. Party publications criticized the elections boycott and Salas stepped down as party chairman (he remains in the Central Committee). A temporary party chairman, Benito Tiamzon (variously known as “Kumander Victoriano” or “Ka”—short for Kasama or Comrade—“Percy”), took over.¹²²

At about the same time, a senior party theoretician, Saturnino Ocampo, former business editor of the *Manila Times*, and Antonio

121. Agence France Presse despatch, Manila, January 6, 1986, in FBIS, January 6, 1986, p. P15.

122. *The Sunday Times* (Manila), June 8, 1986, p. 1, col. 3; *Ang Pahayagang Malaya* (Manila), June 7, 1986, p. 1, col. 4.

Zumel, the principal leader of the National Democratic Front (NDF), the party's earlier named complex of labor, youth, women's and other front groups, were authorized to enter into peace talks with Aquino. Ocampo and Zumel appear to be the leaders of a more moderate faction that has questioned the uncompromising hardline tactics of intimidation associated with Salas. The Tiamzon appointment is temporary, however, until the Central Committee can review it, presumably in light of any progress the party may have made in winning concessions from the Aquino regime and in gaining influence in various institutions and social strata during the liberalized post-Marcos political atmosphere. Meanwhile, Sison, released on March 5, 1986 from detention over the strenuous objections of Enrile and senior military officials, has been lecturing intensively and rebuilding his own base on the Left, including promoting new political organizations like the *Partido ng Bayan* and the "New Democratic Party".

It is necessary to stress that the Salas-Ocampo factional split has been costly to the CPP. Toward the end of May 1986, it was reported that some 200 NPA guerrillas had been executed by their fellow rebels in the preceding three months alone—an estimate that may well have turned out to be too low. On occasion, NPA executions are said to have involved "zombies," i.e. alleged "traitors" or government infiltrators.¹²³ In early October 1986, the Army's regional command in Northern Mindanao reported that the NPA had executed 600 of its own men in a bloody purge in that region since the early months of the year. Compounding the confusion are reports that Marcos loyalists are funding some local NPA cadres to "destabilize" the Aquino government.¹²⁴ The CPP factionalism and infighting also have produced uncertainty in party policy. Supposed CPP demands that Communists be included in a new coalition government, or in some of the government commissions and boards, has deepened suspicion in many quarters.¹²⁵ When José Sison declared that the NPA would not agree to a cease-fire until specified "land reform" had been carried out in the country, other CPP leaders, reportedly including the new dominant Tiamzon group, declared that Sison was not authorized to speak for the party.¹²⁶ During the negotiations between the government and the Communists following the December 10, 1986 truce, party spokesmen

123. *The Economist* (London), May 24, 1986, p. 36; PNA despatch, Manila, May 13, 1986, in FBIS, May 13, 1986, p. P16.

124. *The News Herald* (Manila), May 7, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, May 8, 1986, p. P7.

125. *Asiaweek*, June 22, 1986, p. 22.

126. *The Manila Evening Post*, May 3, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, May 8, 1986, p. P8; *The Straits Times*, March 4, 1986, p. 5, col. 1.

reiterated the need for land reform and an end to U.S. bases in the country. Meanwhile, the NPA's "general staff" accused Armed Forces Chief Fidel Ramos of sabotaging Aquino's peace efforts by ordering a nationwide AFP offensive against the Communist insurgents.¹²⁷

Aquino herself has been charged by various CPP quarters of following an uncertain policy. The President recently was reminded that on December 26, 1984, along with leaders of other groups then in opposition to Marcos, she had signed an agreement pledging legalization of the CPP, a redress of all legitimate grievances of those who had resorted to rebellion and an amnesty and release of political detainees. But, since the January 1986 Presidential campaign, Aquino has been downplaying any legalization of the CPP, emphasizing instead the cease-fire and peace talk process, and warning further that Communist violence will be met with retribution.¹²⁸

The perception that Mrs. Aquino, by virtue of her family background and social status, belongs to the same set of traditional Filipino oligarchies that dominated the era of Marcos and his predecessors, led some party leaders openly to doubt her ability to change public policy. The Philippines still were viewed as gripped by "feudalism," "fascism" and "US imperialism."¹²⁹ Other CPP-NPA elements, like those in the Ocampo-Zumel faction, see advantages in the liberalized Aquino era for the party, particularly the opportunity to expand the party's reach among different interest groups. Certainly, the party's NDF front complex and its labor union ally the *Kilusang Mayo Uno* have been able to be more active in proselytizing than in the Marcos era. This, however, also puts the CPP "moderates," as well as Aquino, in a quandary, as the hardline anti-Communist group around Enrile and in the military warn against classical Communist "talking while fighting" tactics, and stress alleged Communist infiltration in key industries and various national government offices.

On October 30, 1986, a CPP statement formally rejected the new Aquino-supported Constitution for the Philippines. The party described the new charter as "pro-imperialist and anti-masses," and charged that the references in the Constitution to human rights and social justice were mere "bourgeois-democratic" embellishments. The party's Regional Commissions quickly followed suit in the following

127. *The Straits Times*, May 16, 1986, p. 7, col. 7.

128. Cf. José M. Sison, "Pitfalls of a Legal CPP," *Ang Pahayagang Malaya*, June 7, 1986, p. 1, col. 4.

129. See, e.g., the interview of CPP leader "Andreas del Fiero" in *The New York Times*, March 15, 1986, p. 1, col. 3.

months. For example, the Central Luzon party organization, in early December 1986, characterized the Constitution as designed to “legitimize the U.S. imperialist control” over the country. Meanwhile, leading pro-CPP organizations like the KMU and the People’s Party (*Partido ng Bayan*) attacked the Aquino cabinet’s “pro-American bias” following its November 23, 1986 reshuffle.¹³⁰ Under these conditions, to continue to sit down with Aquino’s representatives in order to achieve a truce and a political settlement of differences seemed merely a tactic, while the party positioned itself for inevitable intensification of armed struggle.

The “Private Armies”—At the close of April 1986, Philippine Constabulary intelligence sources estimated that there were “131 private armies still operating nationwide” in the Philippines.¹³¹ Though some of the leaders of these “armies” were said to have fled the country, or had been “neutralized” by security forces, the same sources declared that most of the “armies” were still “intact and well armed,” and that they had possession of an estimated 8,700 firearms. To the author, the latter is a very conservative, and probably low figure. The total number of those involved in these “private armies” and other armed gangs—some of a more criminal and transient variety—is hard to gauge. Many of their members are involved only on a “part-time” or intermittent basis. In the author’s estimation, not less than 130,000 persons in the aggregate are involved.

Elsewhere, the types of these armed groups and the socio-economic circumstances that gave rise to them have been explored in greater detail.¹³² These groups deserve notice here because collectively they—like the Church, the Armed Forces and the Communists—constitute an important and largely unpredictable element in power in contemporary Filipino politics and government. The new February 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that all private armies “not recognized by duly constituted authority” should be “dismantled.” The “Civilian Home Defense Force” (CHDF) would also be subject to disbanding if found not to be “consistent” with the concept of a “citizen armed force” provided for elsewhere in the Constitution. In the present Philippine political economy, it seems likely, however, that a number of private armies will find recognition “by duly consti-

130. *Ang Pahayagang Malaya*, December 5, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, December 9, 1986, p. P11.

131. *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (Manila), April 30, 1986, p. 1, col. 1.

132. Cf. Justus M. van der Kroef, “‘Private Armies’ and Extra-Judicial Violence in the Philippines,” *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, Winter, 1986 (forthcoming).

tuted authority." Even if they are not "duly constituted," they or others like them will continue to exist.

The 70,000-man "Civilian Home Defense Force" (CHDF) originally was organized in 1974 as a para-military organization under the Philippine Constabulary in order to assist in anti-Communist and other security operations in the rural areas. Over the years, however, CHDF units, like a number of special, poorly supervised, AFP "task forces," assumed an increasingly independent operational character. They often became indistinguishable from mere dacoity, extorting and terrorizing local village populations and abusing human rights. In addition, some local CHDF units, wearing special uniforms and never seeming to want for weapons and other equipment, in effect became "private armies" of wealthy, powerful estate owners and local political leaders, many of whom were close Marcos supporters. Probably no one, not even the top AFP staff, knows exactly how many CHDF personnel there are. At the close of July 1986, AFP chief Fidel Ramos estimated that only 53,000 CHDF members were considered full-time, "duly appointed," and entitled to allowances; 17,000 other CHDF presumably were part-timers. Ramos has urged a reduction of the CHDF to 45,000 full-time regulars, while opposing any dissolution of the force for fear it would "surely weaken the territorial defense system." Members of Aquino's cabinet on the other hand, including one time Local Government Minister Aquilino Pimentel Jr., repeatedly have urged Aquino to disarm and disband the CHDF altogether and return police authority to responsible local officials.¹³³ (Plans for this are said to be ready for implementation after the Constitutional ratification plebiscite in February, 1987).

Even, if the CHDF formally were to be declared dissolved, or even reformed, at some time in the future, most of its units would probably remain so much a part of local security and political elite power structures that the basic function of these CHDF units would surface again in some other organizational form. Not surprisingly, the CPP-NPA over and over has demanded the dissolution of the CHDF and the "dismantling of private armies" generally as priority items in peace discussions or discussion of a cease-fire with the Aquino government.¹³⁴ Virtually without exception, however, Philippine Constabulary and Army commanders with whom this writer discussed the

133. *Idid*. On the use of CHDF units by landlords on Negros, for example, see also *We Forum* (Quezon City), October 22-28, 1985, p. 7, col. 1. On Ramos' estimates, see *Business Day* (Manila), July 29, 1986, p. 11, in FBIS, August 1, 1986, p. P6.

134. *Sunday Chronicle* (Manila), June 15, 1986, p. 1, col. 3; *Business Day* (Manila), March 19, 1986, p. 10, in FBIS, March 25, p. P13.

CHDF in the past year recognize the organization's grave problems of discipline and operational control; yet none would be pleased to see the CHDF dissolved completely.

In the murky, lawless atmosphere in which the CHDF, various military "task forces" and other "private armies," or furtive armed religious cult groups operate, the line between one organization or cause often becomes difficult to distinguish from another, or from the pillage and violence committed by ordinary criminal gangs. One illustration will suffice. In mid-1986, scores of inhabitants of the village of Puso, near Bacolod City, on the island of Negros, in a petition to president Aquino said that the safety and security in their area had gravely deteriorated. The petitioners declared that the Army's Eleventh Infantry Battalion stationed in their area first had formed an auxiliary counterinsurgency group under the name KADRE (*Kalayaan, Demokrasya Ug Reporma*—"Freedom, Democracy and Reforms"), some of whose members had been NPA rebels who ostensibly had surrendered. It was charged, however, that KADRE members, apparently with Eleventh Battalion connivance, began masquerading as NPA rebels, thereby exploiting the local population with greater impunity. However, another local NPA band also surrendered to the Battalion, creating a new rival counterinsurgency group also engaged in abuses of the hapless Puso villagers. The latter now were caught in a crossfire between rival counterinsurgency (?) or NPA (?) bands operating with local Army connivance.¹³⁵

Meanwhile, especially on Mindanao, and emerging as a partial reaction to the Fundamentalist Islamic resurgence in that region, several dozen, colorfully named, armed Christian charismatic bands have appeared, formally dedicated to exterminating both the NPA and local Muslim secessionist groups, as well as warring with criminal gangs and other local "private armies." There are some 40 such anti-communist Christian cult "armies." During the early 1980s, one of these groups, "Rock Christ," at one time numbering some 3,000 members, reportedly killed at least one hundred persons and was responsible for scores of kidnappings and "disappearances" in Misamis Oriental province. Weapons and intelligence provided by a unit of the 125th Philippine Airborne Company stationed in Pagadian city in the early 1980s is said to have helped "Rock Christ" get started.¹³⁶ Members of other still active groups, like the so-called Tadtad (also called "Corazon Se-

135. *Ang Pahayangang Malaya* (Manila), June 8, 1986, p. 16, col. 1.

136. On "Rock Christ" see, e.g., *Human Rights Violations in the Philippines. An Account of Torture, "Disappearances," Extra-Judicial Executions, and Illegal Detentions* (Amnesty International U.S.A., New York, 1983), pp. 18-19.

ñor" or "Heart of the Lord"), go forth "chanting pig Latin incantations and brandishing poison tipped knives" in their war against "Communist guerrillas and other 'enemies of God.'"¹³⁷ Still other charismatic cult armies, like the "Philippine Divine Missionaries of Christ" (PDMC), sharply clashed with roving NPA squads in the middle of 1986. Communist guerrilla leaders claimed that the alleged "anti-people" activities of the PDMC and other cult armies, including terrorism and extortion of farmers, demanded swift retribution.¹³⁸

Traditional loyalties toward a local "warlord," resentment of Christians in their vicinity involving disputed land rights and, more recently, the widening impact of the Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Fundamentalism among Muslims everywhere, all shape participation in the "Moro National Liberation Front" (MNLF). The MNLF originally emerged in the 1960s and, although now badly fractured, is dedicated to the defense of the land, Islamic religious legal rights, social and economic advancement, and, in varying degrees, autonomy or secession of portions of the Southern Philippines and their formation as a new Islamic state. Muslims comprise only some 25 percent of the whole Southern Philippine population, however, and only in two provinces, Sulu and Lanao del Sur, are they decisively in the majority.¹³⁹

At present, the term MNLF almost has a generic meaning, comprising at least three major political factions, and scores of armed rival Muslim bands. Some of these bands are little more than private armies; "the Barracudas," for example, primarily are the bodyguard of the deposed, pro-Marcos, former governor of Lanao del Sur province, Ali Dimaporo, who is feuding with the Aquino government. Others, more broadly political in orientation, consider themselves the military cadre of a future, autonomous, "Moro Republic," in keeping with agreements worked out in Libya during the 1970s between Marcos and MNLF representatives, and earlier in 1987 in Jedah.

In mid-1986, AFP Chief General Fidel Ramos estimated the strength of all MNLF units to be "about 5,300 armed regulars." But knowledgeable former MNLF leaders note—and rightly so, in this writer's opinion—that the size of the armed MNLF has been greatly exaggerated, and that "just over 2,000 armed men" is a more accurate

137. Despatch by Cecil Morella, Agence France Presse, Manila, July 7, 1985, in FBIS, July 10, 1985, p. P7.

138. *Filipino Times* (Manila), May 30-June 5, 1986, p. 10, col. 1; *The Manila Times*, June 9, 1986, p. 3, col. 4.

139. On the origins of the MNLF, see T.J.S. George, *Revolt in Mindanao. The Rise of Islam in Philippine Politics* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1980); Leila G. Noble, "Muslim Separatism in the Philippines," *Asian Survey*, November, 1981, pp. 1097-1111.

assessment of the movement's military strength.¹⁴⁰ As in the case of the NPA, however, the armed core of the MNLF is augmented considerably by an unarmed satellite following motivated by political conviction, fear and opportunism. Aquino's efforts to reach a rapprochement with the MNLF have not succeeded. On September 5, 1986 in Jolo, Aquino and MNLF leader Nur Misuari agreed to end hostilities between government and the Bangsa Moro (Muslim Nation) armed forces. But, on October 12, 1986, Armed Forces Chief Ramos charged Misuari with having violated the agreement; Moro insurgents continued to attack army patrols on Mindanao.¹⁴¹ Shortly afterwards, Misuari announced that the MNLF would not recognize the new Constitution, even though the Charter provided for the creation of "autonomous regions for Muslim Mindanao." An "independence proclamation" by Misuari on behalf of a new Moro Republic on November 25, 1986 underscored the intractability of the problem of achieving a settlement between the Philippine government and Moro guerrilla dissidents, given the general environment of gang violence in the region. Meanwhile rival Moro factions criticized both Aquino and Misuari.

For the tens of thousands of underemployed or unemployed young males in the Philippines living in one of Asia's poorer and stagnant economies, an affiliation with an armed gang—any gang—affords status, adventure and, for as long as it lasts, a means of support. Ritualistic posturing, as in the case of the charismatic cult gangs, may be important. But except perhaps in the cadre structure of the NPA, and among some of the religious MNLF leadership, hard core ideology is not the essence of all these little outlaw power structures. Rather, the "private armies" are symptoms of the failure of the diverse and geographically scattered Filipino people to secure for themselves a broadly accepted constitutional base of government, infused by a common adhesion to public law.

Meanwhile, there is no shortage of recruits for the "private armies," nor of new organizations to accommodate them. One illustration will suffice. Not the least of the current sources of instability of the Aquino government and its successors is the presence not just of loosely defined civilian "Marcos loyalists" but of AFP military, who have been "Absent without Official Leave" (AWOL) since February 25, 1986. Claims made by Marcos from time to time, from his Hono-

140. *The News Herald* (Manila), June 9, 1986, p. 6, col. 3; *Ang Pahayagang Malaya*, June 11, 1986, p. 4, col. 4.

141. *The Manila Chronicle*, October 12, 1986, in FBIS, October 14, 1986, p. P11.

lulu exile, that a large segment of the AFP remains loyal to him have been rejected as “fabricated and exaggerated” by the Defense Ministry, while Armed Forces Chief Ramos repeatedly has dismissed the threat of any mass action or armed resistance by Marcos supporters.¹⁴² Yet, reports persist emanating from within the military intelligence community that (1) 40,000 Philippine military abandoned their posts after Aquino assumed office and still are “AWOL,” and (2) scores of active and retired pro-Marcos AFP officers are organizing a “destabilizing” campaign and even an armed resistance movement, using distant Palawan province as their initial rallying base.¹⁴³ Widely rumored to be in the pay of the former President’s followers, the participants in periodic pro-Marcos demonstrations in Manila’s Rizal Park, indeed, may constitute no threat at all to Aquino’s future. But the Philippines hardly needs the deprivations of still more roaming armed gangs, whatever their ideological or political motivation.

V. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

A month before the February 7, 1986 Presidential election, Mrs. Aquino, in an address before members of the country’s leading business associations, outlined the principles and priorities of her economic policy. Her first concern, she said, would be to address the interlocking problems of poverty, underemployment and unemployment. She said her government would plan to “move decisively” to alleviate these problems, not least because she considered such movement to be integrally related to “our response” to the Communist insurgency. Further, she planned to renegotiate the terms of the Philippines’ foreign debt, then standing at \$26 billion. She also declared she would “dismantle” the sugar, coconut and other monopolies (strongholds of Marcos’ favorites) and stimulate investment, “primarily” in labor intensive, rurally based, small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises, particularly in food production for domestic consumption. In general, she emphasized that her government would have “higher expectations of self regulation and social responsibility from business”—higher, presumably, than in the Marcos era. Foreign investment would be welcome in the Philippines, but “only” if it supplemented domestic capital in those major areas where domestic capital was inadequate.¹⁴⁴

142. *The Straits Times*, April 24, 1986, p. 6, col. 3; *The News Herald* (Manila), June 5, 1986, p. 1, col. 4; Radio Quezon City, May 10, 1986, in FBIS, May 13, 1986, p. P6.

143. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 20, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, May 22, 1986, p. P10; *The Manila Evening Post*, June 23, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, June 26, 1986, p. P6.

144. *Business Day* (Manila), January 7, 1986, p. 20, in FBIS, January 9, 1986, p. P2.

Though hardly sufficient time has passed to render a comprehensive judgment on the implementation of Aquino's economic program, enough has become apparent to draw some preliminary conclusions. First, it seems well to sketch the plight of the Philippine economy. By any measure, that economy is among Asia's sickest; certainly it is currently the least flourishing in ASEAN (the six-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations comprising the Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand).

In 1970, the Philippine annual Gross National Product (GNP) growth rate had been 6.6 percent. By 1982 it had dropped to 2.8 percent, and in 1984 and 1985 it was a negative 5.3 percent and 3.95 percent, respectively. Philippine per capita income in 1985 was \$580. This was still higher, to be sure, than that of \$560 in Indonesia—but the Indonesian economy, despite the slump in oil prices, has not experienced the sagging GNP of its Philippine neighbor. Not only does the Philippines suffer from one of Asia's highest inflation rates (25 percent in 1985 and 1986), but also from sharp polarizations of income and wealth. In an opinion of the Philippine Supreme Court, after a review of expert economic data in a relevant judicial proceeding, Philippine *families* earning monthly incomes of 2500 Pesos (about US \$125) or less, were legally poor, and some 75 percent of the country's 55 million inhabitants were said to be in that category, according to the Court. In another calculation, 2 percent of all Filipino households not only have monthly incomes of 25,000 Pesos (about US \$1250) or more, but together they hold about 16.5 percent of the 52 billion Pesos Philippine national income.¹⁴⁵

In the Metro Manila area alone, with its 7 million population, the official unemployment rate is about 20 percent. But other, more authoritative, estimates of Manila's unemployment go as high as 30 percent, while for the nation as a whole the unemployment rate is set at between 15 percent and 20 percent of the labor force, with an additional 45 percent nationwide considered to be underemployed.¹⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the nationwide annual crude birth rate is at least 2.3 percent, one of the region's highest. The gap of opportunity between rich and poor is widening: only 39 percent of Filipino children enrolled in the first grade ever complete their secondary education because of what the Philippine Ministry of Education calls the "economic cri-

145. *Asiaweek*, February 16, in 1986, p. 42; *Times Journal* (Manila), November 18, 1984, p. 4, in FBIS, November 20, 1984, p. P5.

146. *Bulletin Today* (Manila), December 16, 1985, p. 25, in FBIS, December 24, 1985, p. P16; *Asiaweek*, May 25, 1986, p. 62; *Business Day* (Manila), November 20, 1985, p. 2, in FBIS, November 26, 1985, p. P23.

sis.”¹⁴⁷ In widely separated areas of the country, the effects of malnutrition on children are becoming apparent. Those effects in the rural areas such as Negros and Samar—both active operational grounds of the NPA—are well-known. But a recent study of the urban poor in Metro Manila estimates that 26.7 percent of children in that city in the age category from 6 months to 4 years also are malnourished (meaning moderately or severely underweight), which compares with 20.5 percent overall of rural children in the same age group.¹⁴⁸

Still, a volatile urban mass keeps growing. It is estimated that “for every 10 Metro Manilans today, at least three to four reside in slum or squatter areas” where basic services, whether housing or health care facilities, are absent. But all the while migration to the capital continues from the even less promising countryside. Rural migration to Manila during the first half of the 1980s has been conservatively estimated at 150,000 people a year. By the year 2000, the capital will have 9.5 million inhabitants. Considering how Mrs. Aquino came to office, the “human wall” during the “miracle at EDSA,” and the long-term political implications of “people power,” the importance of a growing impoverished mass of Metro Manilans hardly requires elaboration.¹⁴⁹

Against this background, it is difficult to underestimate the force of the expectations of the Manila poor centering around the fall of Marcos—however unrealistic these hopes may be. One tragi-comic illustration of this came on February 26, 1986, only hours after Marcos had fled the Philippines. Thousands of Manila’s slum dwellers rushed out to muddy, garbage-infested, worthless strips of land, including roadsides, in northern Manila. There they staked out legally meaningless claims on small plots for home sites or cultivation. Somehow they hoped that Aquino’s coming to power and a vague election promise of land redistribution would permit them to keep their plots.¹⁵⁰ The new Aquino-endorsed Philippine Constitution of February 1987 captures something of this mood of popular expectations. In its article on “Family Rights,” for example, it declares that “The State shall defend” a family’s right to “a family living wage and income,” and “proper care and nutrition” for children.¹⁵¹

147. *The Straits Times*, December 31, 1985, p. 6.

148. *The Manila Times*, June 6, 1986, p. 7, col. 8.

149. Preceding quoting and data from *Philippine Dispatch* (Manila), 4th week of May, 1986, p. 10, col. 1-4.

150. Michael Browning, Knight-News-Tribune despatch from Manila, February 27, 1986.

151. *New Day* (Quezon City), October 13, 1986, p. 9, in FBIS, October 17, 1986, p. P42.

Surrounded by charges of extensive corruption, by the granting of monopolies like those in sugar and coconut oil production, by reports of billions of dollars siphoned off by the Marcoses and conspicuously consumed or invested abroad—the Philippine economy is unlikely to find a balanced assessment for some time. Moreover, the hopes of “Juan de la Cruz” (the Filipino nickname for the man in the street) that better economic times are ahead under Aquino are beginning to fade.

For example, prices of basic necessities—food, clothing, shelter, medical care, schooling and transportation costs—have not fallen and are unlikely to do so. Even after costly strikes, wage increases do not meet basic family needs for most Manila factory workers. Though a modest upswing did occur later in the year, GNP growth for 1986 is expected to be “flat.” Indeed, already at the close of July 1986, the Aquino government announced that first half year GNP had fallen a further 3 percent from the comparable period a year ago.¹⁵² Coincidentally, with the upsurge of anti-Marcos agitation following the assassination of former Senator Benigno Aquino (August 21, 1983) at Manila International Airport, economic activity began to drop sharply. Between 1983 and mid-1986 there was a nearly 13 percent decline in overall economic activity.¹⁵³ By mid-1986, manufacturing output and industrial employment rose modestly, but construction in the second quarter of 1986 dropped by 60 percent compared to the first quarter—“a blow to Manila’s army of casual laborers.”¹⁵⁴

One reason for further diminished business confidence and the hesitation of foreign investors apparent since 1983 is that the Aquino government is perceived as unable to calm the labor market. During Marcos’ martial law era (1973-81), strikes were forbidden. Between the period of the lifting of martial law and Marcos’ fall, the number of strikes or work stoppages began to grow. But since the rise of Aquino, they accelerated even more: by the end of July 1986, for example, there had already been 368 strikes for the year, surpassing the total number of strikes, 371, for all of 1985. The growing political turbulence since 1983, and including the first half year of the Aquino administration, meant losses to the Philippines of some 4 million man-days. Worse, the policy pronouncements of Aquino’s then Labor Minister Augusto Sanchez were perceived by many in the business sector as inflammatory and as encouraging political labor action and

152. *Manila Bulletin*, June 11, 1985, p. 15, col. 3; *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 7, 1986, p. 56.

153. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 7, 1986, p. 54.

154. *Ibid.*, November 6, 1986, p. 78.

strikes by leftist trade unions like the earlier named KMU (*Kilusang Mayo Uno*—May First Movement). Meanwhile, hundreds of businesses were and are closing, laying off workers. In the period from January to May 1986, the total of new business enterprises established (2,947) was down 6.8 percent from the year before. But the number of new entrants into the Philippine labor market each year now is 750,000.¹⁵⁵ Toward the close of 1986, Aquino directed the Philippine Labor Ministry to take a more aggressive stand in settling strikes through mediation. The resignation of Sanchez, in mid-December 1986, led to angry criticism of and demonstrations against Aquino by KMV and the left, but soothed the business community somewhat.

To service the Philippines' more than \$27 billion total debt now requires about 70 percent of the country's export earnings of about \$5 billion—and during the first half year of the Aquino administration the value of the country's exports were down by 0.4 percent from the previous year. Yet, despite all these unpromising indicators, there are many international sources willing to provide the Aquino government's most immediate economic demands, such as meeting the \$1.35 billion national budget deficit in 1986 and reorganizing the economy for long-term stabilization and growth. Contributions, mostly loans and credits, from the U.S. Economic Support Fund, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and private Japanese banks, now available to Aquino, already aggregate about \$740 million, with an additional \$1.7 billion in current pledges.¹⁵⁶ Additionally, there have been assurances of aid from the European Economic Community, Britain and Canada.¹⁵⁷ By the end of 1986, the flexibility of the International Monetary Fund in providing new stand-by credits and the readiness of the Asian Development Bank and other sources to provide credits for various capital projects, even began to raise the question of whether the Aquino government could "digest" the funding approved.¹⁵⁸

A basic development problem, however, is the dissension within the Aquino government over the course of economic policy, particularly import liberalization. The International Monetary Fund has insisted on such liberalization as a condition for new credits and debt rescheduling. The liberalization demand requires Manila to lift re-

155. *Asiaweek*, June 29, 1986, p. 44; *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 7, 1986, pp. 54-55.

156. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 July, 1986, p. 63 and August 7, 1986, p. 56; *Asiaweek*, May 25, 1986, p. 62 and June 29, 1986, p. 47.

157. Agence France Presse despatch, Hongkong, June 27, 1986, in FBIS, July 1, 1986, p. P7.

158. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 6, 1986, p. 79.

restrictions on the imports of more than 1200 items, ranging from food products to manufactures, some of which are produced in the Philippines. It is feared that, because of import liberalization, Philippine domestic industries will be severely damaged. Trade and Industry Minister José Concepcion and major Philippine industrial associations have protested that the IMF demand "is a deliberate means for about 212 industrial countries of the 149 member nations of the World Bank and IMF to make the Philippines go back to import dependence," even though other countries, meanwhile, are permitted to raise protectionist barriers for their own industries.¹⁵⁹ Remarkably, however, Finance Minister Jaime Ongpin, during a meeting of major aid donors to the Philippines at the "Consultative Group on the Philippines," led by the IMF in Tokyo at the close of May 1986, promised "trade liberalization" among a package of proposed Philippine reforms. Foreign banking sources at the meeting were skeptical, because Ongpin's offers "did not represent the agreed position of the Philippine government."¹⁶⁰

Meanwhile, some top Aquino government planners, particularly those associated with the government's National Economic and Development Authority, reportedly were in favor of seeing the Philippines become a "competitive free market economy," based on "hard work, thrift and entrepreneurship." An Authority report, also published in May, demanded rejection of the "misguided protectionist policies of the past." The report accepted that there would be "economic shocks" as the country developed a new industrial and commercial base.¹⁶¹ All this has not sat well with the Left. Meanwhile, the new February 1987 Constitution, in its provision on "State Policies," requires that the state "shall develop" a self-reliant and independent national economy effectively controlled by Filipinos.

With economic and political nationalism becoming increasingly popular as a driving force in the Philippines' perception of itself in the world, Aquino, by the end of July 1986, had approved a compromise suggestion of Concepcion. This postponed until October 1986 the immediate lifting of import controls on some 160 items, and provided for another postponement of the lifting of controls on more than 240 additional products until well beyond June 1987, when they would have been "liberalized." Concepcion had warned that failure to postpone would have meant failing to "listen to what our people have to say."

159. *New Day* (Quezon City), July 28, 1986, p. 7, in FBIS, July 29, 1986, p. P9; Xinhua despatch, Manila, July 28, 1986, in FBIS, July 30, 1986, p. E1.

160. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 19, 1986, p. 66.

161. *The New York Times*, July 7, 1986, p. D8, col. 2.

Then Labor Minister Augusto Sanchez in the meantime emphasized that import "liberalization" would worsen the unemployment situation, as domestic industries would run the risk of being "buried" by imports.¹⁶²

The IMF apparently acquiesced in those decisions when it approved a new Philippine loan and "special drawing rights" package. The *quid pro quo* was Aquino's agreement to a range of other, deep, financial and economic reforms, ranging from restructuring of government financial institutions and tax reforms, to dismantling of sugar and coconut production monopolies and the "privatization" of government controlled corporations. Many of these reforms have their critics within the cabinet. The harsh reality of heavy budget deficits persists, however. And these deficits, short of debt repudiation, can for an indefinite time only be met through extensive foreign assistance.

The main problem is that traditional donor nations are seeking to bring their deficits under control. A case in point involves the Philippines and the United States. To meet its US \$1.35 billion government deficit in 1986, the Aquino government needed more than 1 billion dollars from foreign sources. Immediate foreign commitments available, however, still left some \$500 million to be met from the World Bank, IMF and other sources. Among the other sources was the United States, whose House of Representatives, on August 7, 1986, voted to provide the Philippines with \$350 million in aid, including an immediate \$200 million in "ready cash." The latter amount—as Aquino's supporters put it—"could make or break" Aquino's regime. Aquino's backers in the House originally had asked for \$250 million in "immediate" cash assistance. This was reduced by \$50 million, however, after another amendment to eliminate the cash advance completely had failed. Even so, the reduced amount in immediate aid was voted only after some acerbic debate, in which one exasperated Congressman protested: "We're asked to increase our own deficit by a quarter billion dollars so the Philippines' deficit can be reduced by half a billion dollars. Does that make sense to you?"¹⁶³

It apparently all does make sense to the Reagan Administration. Though there has been some hesitation and reassessment of Aquino's accession to power in Reagan Administration circles, Washington clearly has taken the plunge. U.S. State Department officials have stressed the need to "forge stronger links with the new generation of Filipino leaders," and to assist in appropriate efforts "to restore eco-

162. *Manila Bulletin*, July 31, 1986, p. 13, in FBIS, p. P10.

163. United Press International dispatch, Washington, D.C., August 7, 1986.

conomic prosperity to the Philippines.”¹⁶⁴ The latter was an unfortunate phraseology because it raised the question when—in modern times—the Philippines ever had been prosperous. Moreover, a promise by Washington, made on April 23, 1986, to introduce a broad new program of economic and military assistance for the Aquino government “as an important manifestation of support by the American people in the Philippine people as they face a difficult challenge ahead,” was not all that new after all.¹⁶⁵ The Marcos government also had been a major recipient of stepped up U.S. aid.

In fiscal year 1981, for example, total U.S. aid to the Philippines was \$173.2 million (more than 97 million of it in economic assistance, the rest in military aid). In fiscal 1985—Marcos’ crisis year—American assistance had grown to \$264.4 million (\$222.2 million in economic and \$42 million in military aid). Even for the “out years,” and before the newly-approved infusions of assistance when Aquino took office, \$235.9 million had been allocated for 1986 (\$181.2 in economic and \$54.5 million in military aid) and only an estimated \$228.4 million (\$125.7 million in economic and \$102.7 million in military aid) for 1987.¹⁶⁶ The last figure might lead the unwary to assume that the initial U.S. policy reaction—before the Reagan Administration’s April 23, 1986 announcement—to the dramatic Filipino events was to reduce assistance to the Philippines below the 1985 level, but to enlarge the military component in such requested aid.

The April 23, 1986 promise of more American help to Aquino as an “important” gesture by the American to the Philippine people, only came after a special “Lobbying” journey to Washington two weeks earlier by Philippine Finance Minister Jaime Ongpin.¹⁶⁷ The latter had minced no words in describing his country’s immediate financial crisis and its long-term development problems.

Subsequently, U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz said that he, “as a Chicago economist,” could not have improved on Ongpin’s assurance to the Asian Development Bank that “the principal thrust” of the Philippine economic recovery was “to motivate the private sector” to resume its “traditional role as the prime mover” of the Philippine economy.¹⁶⁸ It has been the relationship of that private sector to for-

164. *U.S. Department of State Bulletin*, July, 1986, p. 52.

165. *The New York Times*, April 24, 1986, p. A4, col. 3.

166. *Ibid.*, February 23, 1986, sec. 4, p. 1, col. 4.

167. *Ibid.*, April 8, 1986, p. A13, col. 1-5.

168. George P. Shultz, “Reform in the Philippines and American Interests: The U.S. Role in Consolidating Democracy,” *Current Policy*, (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.), no. 842, June 4, 1986, p. 1.

eign investment capital and to the development assistance received from such institutions as the World Bank, particularly during the Marcos era, that earlier raised probing questions in various quarters about the continuing dependent condition of the Philippine political economy.¹⁶⁹ There already are critics who wonder whether Mrs. Aquino's policies in this regard will mark a significant break from the Marcos past. Today, the Aquino regime too is under attack from labor and Left intellectual and media circles for permitting foreign lenders to dictate the structure of the national economy, at the cost of the small Filipino farmer and entrepreneur. The import liberalization scheme, for example, has been branded as benefitting primarily "US agribusiness interests" and foreign manufacture importers.¹⁷⁰

Yet, without important liberalization, bank restructuring and "privatization" of government-controlled corporations, as the IMF and some other foreign lenders insist, an operational rationalization of the economy may well be all but impossible. And without IMF and foreign lenders' support, the aid to keep the Aquino regime afloat will not be forthcoming. Without such help, it also would not allow the Aquino government to implement a massive but huge budget deficit generating public works program—in effect a "crash employment plan" in the countryside.¹⁷¹ It also would be difficult to pay the salaries of the bloated government services, including those of the inefficient state corporations.

Mrs. Aquino and her advisers have discovered that bringing Marcos down was not just a political act. It also brought in its wake—intended or not—the need for a major reorganization of the Philippine economy, a process with implications and obstacles far beyond the simple sloganizing for greater autonomy and distributive justice heard during the Presidential campaign and embodied in the February 1987 Constitution. Reaching the major goals of Aquino's announced economic program before her accession to power, like improving the unemployment problem, promoting food production and smaller labor-intensive enterprises and limiting the role of foreign capital—likely will take a good deal longer than many of her more ardent partisans,

169. Robert B. Stauffer, "The Political Economy of Refeudalization, pp. 180-218 in David A. Rosenberg, ed., *Marcos and Martial Law in the Philippines* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1979); Walden Bello, David Kinley, and Elaine Elinson, *Development Debate: The World Bank in the Philippines* (Institute for Food and Development Policy, San Francisco, 1982).

170. Alejandro Lichauco, "The Aquino Economic Plan," *The Manila Times*, June 9, 1986, p. 6, col. 1-4.

171. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 14, 1986, p. 104.

particularly on the Left, care to wait. It would not be difficult to find a scapegoat, since the Aquino regime also has committed itself, according to the February 1987 Constitution, to recognize "the indispensable role of the private sector" and to provide "incentives to needed investments."

As an unfair, paradoxical reality, in the meantime, there remains the persistent problem of the sense of uncertainty and lack of commitment to the national economic development effort apparent in the Philippine business community, something which Aquino already has castigated. That lack of commitment, sadly, may become part of a self-fulfilling prophecy of Aquino's political and economic future. As one leading Filipino executive, surveying the state of the nation's economy under Aquino, has put it, "if there is no credibility there is no confidence. If there is no confidence you can't attract investments."¹⁷²

VI. CONCLUSION: A COMMUNITY OF U.S.-FILIPINO STRATEGIC INTERESTS?

More than twenty years ago, at the start of the Marcos era, the author, after assessing the Philippine public temper, noted among many Filipinos a weary impatience, often bordering on anger, over the persistent weight of U.S. strategic and economic power in their country.¹⁷³ Much of that angry impatience, then as now, has tended to focus on the U.S. military installations in the Philippines. But, beyond that, there is the resentful realization of Philippine dependence, decade after decade, on U.S. economic largesse.

Yet, with few countries in the world is the human relationship of the United States so close as with the Philippines. With monotonous regularity, year after year, Leftist nationalists, in youth groups like the *Kabataang Makabayan* and in trade unions like the *Kilusang Mayo Uno* (KMU), stage their demonstrations for one reason or another before the American Embassy on Manila's Roxas Boulevard. With equal regularity, every working day, scores of Filipinos early in the day, start lining up before that same Embassy, seeking visas to enter the United States. According to the U.S. *Statistical Abstract* there were, as of 1980, some 501,400 Filipinos in the United States, 44.7 percent of them now naturalized U.S. citizens, leaving nearly 278,000 in some other status. (The actual number of Filipino aliens in the United States probably is much larger.) But whatever that status, for

172. *Asiaweek*, February 16, 1986, p. 42.

173. Justus M. van der Kroef, "The Long, Long Hangover," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 14, 1966, pp. 70-74.

the vast majority of the half million, ties with their land of origin remain strong. And though enduring fashion, especially among the young, demands harsh criticism of the United States almost as a matter of lifestyle, that fashion has never lessened the appeal of the "green card," i.e. permanent residence in America.

Predictably, the rise of Aquino has raised new questions about the Philippine military connection with the United States. These questions typically range from the fairness of the financial *quid pro quo* for Filipinos to have U.S. bases in their country, to the strategic necessity of having them at all. By implication, they also raise questions about the Philippines' regional security needs and foreign policy.

According to a recent analysis by a consortium of Philippine research and study groups working under the auspices of the National Defense College of the Philippines (NDCP), the United States pays much less for the use of its Philippine bases than for such facilities elsewhere in the world.¹⁷⁴ Under the present U.S.-Philippine Military Bases Agreement, which expires in 1991, Washington provides the Manila government with \$900 million of "aid" (the Philippines insists on calling it "rental," thereby emphasizing that it has sovereign power over the bases) for the five-year period 1986-1991 for the use of Clark Air Force Base in Angeles City and Subic Bay Naval Station in Olongapo. This amount, as the NDCP analysis shows, works out to \$180 million a year—which compares with U.S. payment of \$415 million per annum to Spain for use of facilities there, \$501 million annually to Greece, and \$938 million to Turkey. What is termed U.S. access and "landing rights" in Egypt and Israel costs Washington per annum \$1.75 billion and \$1.4 billion, respectively. After comparing all these figures, one Manila columnist wrote that "Whether 'rent' or 'assistance,' we have been getting the short end of the stick from Washington for many years now . . . next time we talk, let's go for the brass ring."¹⁷⁵

Looking at the amount of "rental" payment or "aid" alone is hardly an adequate index of the contribution which the presence of the U.S. bases makes to the Philippine economy. Not in Egypt, Israel, or Turkey, for example, are employment opportunities provided for thousands of local workers, as is the case at the U.S. installations in the Philippines. Nor are there comparable injections of spending into local economies made by U.S. service personnel and their dependents. Still, the "rental" comparisons linger in the public mind, feeding the

174. *Midday* (Manila), June 6, 1981, p. 1, col. 1.

175. *Ibid.*, p. 6, col. 2.

sense of aggrieved dependence and resentment over perceived exploitation that has run for decades through the U.S.-Philippine relationship. In the discussions and decisions of the "Concom" in July and August 1986, that sense of aggrievement was particularly evident.

At present, few authoritative observers doubt that, after 1991, the U.S. military presence in the Philippines will continue. But it will come only after a burst of nationalist rhetoric in the new Philippine Congress, and perhaps after a national plebiscite, and only at the cost to Washington of a substantially higher "rental," as well as further assertions of Philippine sovereign and operational control. No Filipino politician will be able to afford to ignore a considerably increased Filipino public sensitivity to the bases issue, along with a broadened awareness of the importance of the bases to the United States. That greater sensitivity and awareness are themselves a legacy of the fall of Marcos and the rise of Aquino. These, it may be recalled, prompted worried Pentagon estimates of the heavy cost to the United States of having to relocate the Clark and Subic facilities if that became necessary.

The NDCP analysis, moreover, also contains a section, well publicized in the Philippine media, on the eleven U.S. military facilities in the Philippines, other than Subic and Clark. Virtually all of these eleven are highly sophisticated and needed communications stations, maintaining intelligence flow or surveillance at a time of a growing Soviet military presence in the Philippine strategic environment. Because of Aquino and the much amplified voice she has given to one dimension of the public temper that is more openly and sharply critical of the persisting U.S. presence in the country, the periodic "battle of the bases" fought in Philippine politics is likely to be more intense in the future.

But are the U.S. bases in the Philippines necessary at all—particularly to the Philippines? To some observers, the liability of the bases outweighs any advantages, since they are seen as so many "magnets to attack." That view, *inter alia*, is heard among some contributors to the NDCP report. Mrs. Aquino's view that the Philippines would not face an external threat if the American bases were removed also strikes a responsive chord in these quarters. As the debate over the future of the bases grew in the middle of 1986, the U.S. Embassy in Manila incautiously entered the fray, issuing a pamphlet rebutting recent Filipino critics of the bases' presence. This merely provoked a further attack, this time from several professors of the University of the Philippines. These professors declared that the very size and sophistication of the U.S. bases made it "likely that five megaton bombs will be

dropped on them.”¹⁷⁶

Meanwhile, U.S. spokesmen, from President Ronald Reagan on down, have stressed that “one cannot minimize the importance of those bases,” and that the bases are essential to support the “wide-ranging [U.S.] commitments all along the Asian littoral,” as Assistant State Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Gaston Sigur, put it.¹⁷⁷ In December 1986, the commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet even declared that if the United States lost its naval and air bases in the Philippines, it “would be turning over our friends and allies to Soviet political and military domination in the region.” Indeed, according to this view, there are no good “alternatives” to the Philippine bases, which remain essential if the United States intends to remain “a Western Pacific power.”¹⁷⁸ In the Philippines, as we have seen, a principal advocate of this position has been former National Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile, who repeatedly has warned that the continued presence of the U.S. bases is necessary because their removal “will create a vacuum in this part of the world.”¹⁷⁹

In this context, the debate over the increased public interest since Aquino's rise to power in the bases issue has also provided greater impetus to a discussion of the Philippines' whole future relationship with other superpowers. What also is emerging as part of the debate over the bases is more attention to the possibility of a “neutral,” genuinely non-aligned, and “inoffensive” Philippines, a country which would not be a danger and, therefore, a friend to all the superpowers and the regional states. The old Cold War alignments, from this point of view, are perceived as obsolete. In this perception, too, both Gorbachev's USSR and Deng Xiaopeng's China are considered as much more interested in pragmatic solutions to their development problems than to ideologically highly charged expansionist ambitions.

Alejandro Melchor, the Philippines' new ambassador to the Soviet Union, reportedly views superpower relations from this angle. Other Aquino cabinet officials, like the Trade and Industry Minister José Concepcion, are particularly interested in mitigating the Philippines' one-sided financial and commercial dependence on the West and Japan, and are anxious to broaden Filipino-Soviet trade relations (which had a total value of only \$44 million in 1985). Mrs. Aquino

176. *New Day*, August 4, 1986, p. 6, in FBIS, August 5, 1986, p. P2.

177. *The Straits Times*, February 21, 1986, p. 14, and Gaston J. Sigur, “US Security Interests in the Philippines” *Current Policy* (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.), no. 815, April 10, 1985, p. 1.

178. *The New York Times*, December 11, 1986, p. A18, col. 1.

179. *Manila Bulletin*, July 23, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, July 24, 1986, p. P4.

supporters also recall that her slain husband, Benigno, essentially shared this "the Cold War is obsolete" philosophy. Benigno Aquino made several visits to the USSR, and in a book on his travels there, entitled *Journey to Moscow*, he urged his countrymen to abandon their negative Cold War preoccupations.¹⁸⁰

However, to note the emergence under Aquino of a still stronger anti-U.S. bases sentiment and a more avowed "neutralist" current in Filipino opinion, is not to say that Philippine foreign policy is about to undergo a fundamental change. Nor is it to say that Philippine strategic relationships with the United States are on the verge of collapse. Despite some audible anti-bases and "neutralist" sentiments, the Philippines continues in the same ambivalent strategic position as that of her fellow members of ASEAN. Though formally committed under their 1971 Kuala Lumpur Declaration to the establishment of ZOPFAN (a "Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality), all ASEAN members also maintain arrangements for regular joint military exercises and formal collective security arrangements with major Western powers, such as the United States with Thailand; Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei with the United Kingdom and Australia. ASEAN members also maintain regular mutual consultations on defense matters.¹⁸¹

Thus far, in the budding debate over future Filipino "neutrality" and over a more evenhanded Filipino relationship with all the superpowers, no one has raised the issue of the continuance of the 1952 US-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty, nor of the 1954 Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty (usually known as the Manila Pact). Despite the formal dissolution of SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), the operational arm of the Manila Pact in 1977, the provisions of the Pact itself remain in force. Under the 1952 Mutual Defense Treaty, which is of indefinite duration, the United States and the Philippines recognize (article 4) that an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the parties would be a threat to the peace, requiring action to meet the "common danger." The Manila Pact essentially repeats this phraseology (article 4, subclause 1), and moreover demands (article 4, subclause 2) that defensive action be taken even if the sovereignty or "political independence" of the contracting parties "is threatened in any way other than by armed attack."¹⁸² The last formulation is espe-

180. *Asiaweek*, August 10, 1986, p. 14.

181. On ASEAN's Kuala Lumpur Declaration and its implications see, e.g., Dick Wilson, *The Neutralization of Southeast Asia* (Praeger, New York, 1975).

182. *Legislation on Foreign Relations with Explanatory Notes. Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives and Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate* (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., March, 1974), pp. 1072 and 1079.

cially significant, because it can be interpreted as a required response to a threat of domestic political or guerrilla subversion.

As the NDCP analysis notes, the current U.S.-Philippine Mutual Bases Agreement provides that "operational use" of the U.S. military installations in the Philippines today, including for the purpose of "military combat operations", falls within the 1953 U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty and the 1954 Manila Pact. Operations to be conducted "other than" those in the context of these two treaties, for example, the emplacement by the United States of long range missiles in the bases, shall be the subject of prior consultation between the two governments. Notwithstanding this, a 1979 amendment to the bases agreement assured the United States of "unhampered" use of its military forces in the Philippines.¹⁸³

In other words, the *raison d'être* of the bases is specifically linked to two key strategic agreements of the Philippine government, now more than a generation old. Should the movement toward elimination of the U.S. bases gain still further momentum in the Philippines, it seems probable that both U.S. and Philippine quarters will call increased attention to the linkage of the bases to the 1952 and 1954 defense treaties. Meanwhile, from the point of living with an anomaly—i.e. voicing a desire for national or regional neutrality while maintaining regular and close military support or security treaty arrangements with major powers outside the region—the Philippines hardly are unique among ASEAN members.

Despite the Reagan Administration's obvious campaign from the middle of 1986 or so onward to charm Mrs. Aquino and stress Washington's commitment to and positive expectations from her regime, it likely will be less America's own strategic needs and more Philippine security interests that ultimately will allow for the continued presence of U.S. bases beyond 1991. Toward making such a decision, Aquino has given a stronger voice and more intellectual depth to the argument of a more "neutral" or truly non-aligned Philippines. U.S. Secretary of the Navy John Lehman might warn, as he did on April 10, 1986, in testimony before a Senate Subcommittee on Seapower that "there are no substitutes" to Subic and Clark bases and that, therefore, it is critical for the United States to retain control of these installations.¹⁸⁴ Lehman's—or any other U.S. official's—concern is likely to be less decisive for Filipinos than Mrs. Aquino's confident perception (i.e.,

183. *Midday* (Manila), June 6, 1986, p. 6, col. 3-4.

184. Associated Press despatch, Washington, D.C., April 10, 1986.

that her country would face no external threat if the United States bases were not renewed) that renewal of U.S. rights simply is too risky.

A major factor in the Philippine risk assessment is the reality of a steady projection of Soviet military power in the South China Sea area and the Pacific. In the past three years, the Soviet naval presence in Pacific waters has nearly doubled. The USSR today has 410 vessels in these waters, among them 115 submarines (of which 30 carry nuclear missiles) and two Kiev-class aircraft carriers. Directly across the South China Sea from the Philippines, at Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay station, the USSR now regularly maintains up to 25 naval vessels. Soviet aircraft permanently stationed in Vietnam include a squadron of advanced MiG-23 fighter aircraft. Some 7,000 Soviet military are now based in Vietnam alone, and the Cambodian port of Kompong Som clearly is being secured to accommodate a regular Soviet military presence. At the same time, the USSR is reaching out across the Eastern Pacific, seeking port facilities or fishing and exploratory rights and offering the assistance of its technicians to such smaller island nations as Kiribati and Vanuatu. If the Soviets' Pacific activity continues, as seems probable, then by 1991 the U.S. Air Force's 9,400 personnel and F-4E fighter squadrons and tactical airlift wing at Clark base, and the 5,300 U.S. sailors, carriers, submarines and other nearby U.S. Seventh Fleet vessels at Subic, would seem a good deal more comforting to doubtful Filipinos.¹⁸⁵

Those in the Philippines who would pin their hopes on a mutual U.S.-Soviet force reduction in the Pacific area also will have to contend with the strategic consequences of one of Southeast Asia's more intractably unresolved problems, i.e. the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia and the Cambodian, ASEAN, U.S. and Chinese resistance to that presence. I will not review the tortuous course of the Cambodian political, military and diplomatic conflict. However, at the close of 1978, the Vietnamese invaded their Cambodian neighbor in force and continue to maintain some 160,000 troops, despite the cost of regular international condemnation and isolation from development opportunities. Suffice it to say that for various reasons none of the three superpowers perceives any urgent need for compromise in the Cambodian problem.¹⁸⁶

Although year after year, numerous proposed solutions to the

185. *The Military Balance 1985-1986* (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1985), pp. 24, 30; *The New York Times*, August 10, 1986, p. E3. See also Alvin H. Bernstein, "The Soviets in Cam Ranh Bay," *The National Interest* (Washington, D.C.) (Spring 1986), pp. 17-29.

186. For an elaboration on these points, see Justus M. van der Kroef, *Dynamics of the*

Cambodian problem whirl about the diplomatic circuit, Vietnam's dependence on the USSR for economic and military assistance (now running an estimated \$2.5 billion per annum) continues apace — as does the Soviet *quid pro quo* in using Vietnamese military installations at Danang, Cam Ranh Bay and elsewhere. The Soviet presence in Vietnam adds to the arsenal of arguments of those pointing to the necessity of maintaining U.S. bases in the Philippines.

Soviet media, to be sure, cite with approval occasional Philippine press comment that the "vacuum theory is a colonialist weapon."¹⁸⁷ This is a reference to the above cited argument that the withdrawal of the United States from Clark and Subic bases would create a dangerous "vacuum". The Soviets also contend that the vacuum theory is "totally at variance with the policy of the USSR," which, it is said, calls for mutual reductions in armed activity and political tensions in the region.¹⁸⁸ Along these lines, on July 28, 1986, in a wide-ranging statement in Vladivostok dealing with Soviet interest in and commitment to a settlement of various unresolved disputes in the Far East, the Soviet party's Secretary General, Mikhail Gorbachev, declared almost in passing that "In general, I'd like to say that if the U.S. were to give up its military presence, say in the Philippines, we wouldn't leave that step unanswered."¹⁸⁹ What Gorbachev had in mind with this vague offer of a *quid pro quo* is speculation at best. In the Aquino government, not even the severest critic of the continuance of U.S. bases believes that Gorbachev's statement "in general" signals an important new Soviet peace overture.

In this connection, the People's Republic of China is also a player in the Cambodian game and, therefore, in the base problem. The United States could reduce its Philippine or Western Pacific military presence. And yet Beijing, implacably opposed to Vietnam's military presence in and political dominance of Cambodia today, would remain a threat to Hanoi — and thus justify Vietnam's continued desire for a Soviet military support presence. The Chinese threat is not an idle one: in 1979 China briefly invaded and occupied a strip of territory in North Vietnam as a "punitive lesson" to Hanoi for its invasion of Cambodia and alleged maltreatment of Chinese residents. Since then, Beijing's spokesmen have warned Hanoi from time to time of the pos-

Cambodian Conflict (The Institute for the Study of Conflict, London, 1986), Conflict Studies no. 183.

187. *Izvestiya* (Moscow), August 8, 1986, p. 4, morning edition, in FBIS, August 11, 1986, p. E1.

188. *Ibid.*

189. *Asiaweek*, August 10, 1986, p. 14.

sibility of a "second punitive lesson." Chinese-Vietnamese military clashes at their common border have been frequent over the years. In short, Philippine security concerns are not just linked to the present commitment of U.S.-Soviet power in the Pacific, but also to a Sino-Vietnamese compromise in Cambodia with which that power commitment is inextricably linked.

Thus far, the Aquino government, like the Marcos regime before it, has shown little interest and taken little initiative in bringing the stalemated Cambodian question to a close. Indeed, official Philippine pronouncements on the matter since 1979 have been fewer than that of any other ASEAN member. What Philippine statements there are on the issue also show little of the probing concern for a diplomatic solution, or even a reaction to the danger of the problem, characteristic of Indonesia, Thai or Singapore statements. The Philippine position, thus far, essentially has been to tag along with the policy proposals of other ASEAN members. This is surprising. For though one may applaud the increased public discussion since the rise of Aquino of the future of U.S. bases in the Philippines, such a debate is unlikely to yield much of a consensus until the triangle of superpower interests around Indochina and the South China Sea is more fully understood.

In the meantime, the dominant U.S. role in the IMF-World Bank, and its influence in international money markets, generally give Washington powerful assets with which to continue to define the Philippine national security agenda. Short of a revolutionary break with the United States and all that it entails, neither Aquino nor her successor regimes seem in a position to alter that agenda.

Noting this, I emphasize that the real danger to future U.S. strategic interests in the country may well come from the Filipino perception that Washington is a meddler, if not a provocateur, in the political polarization process now taking place in the Philippines. Reports that it was the United States that has brought pressure to bear to seek the removal of such allegedly "left leaning" Aquino cabinet members as Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo and Labor Minister Augusto Sanchez feeds such a perception.¹⁹⁰ But indirectly, the founding (or perhaps one should say: re-founding) in mid-August 1986 of the new *Nacionalista* Party as a vehicle for Enrile and the Right, and of the new "People's Party" (*Partido ng Bayan*), led by José Sison, also feeds such a perception.

Meanwhile, the steady bolstering of Aquino's position, including

190. *The New Philippines Daily Express*, August 12, 1986, p. 1, in FBIS, August 13, 1986, p. P8.

by editorial policies of the U.S. media, has not necessarily improved the image of the United States. To be sure, on February 2, 1987 Aquino won an impressive 77% of the electorate's vote in support of her personally endorsed new Constitution. The vote was seen as an endorsement of Aquino's own Presidential legitimacy as well. Critics noted that after carefully replacing the local bureaucracy with her own official appointees, the outcome of the February 2 poll was assured—given past patterns of electoral compliance. More pointed was the failure of the Aquino regime to do any better in reaching a rapprochement with the NPA insurgents than Marcos. On January 30, 1987 CPP spokesmen finally announced that they would not continue the 60-day truce with the AFP after its February 8, 1987 deadline. Within days after the expiration date it came to sharply stepped up fighting. This time a Philippine President faces a Communist resurgence with and AFP critical, if not hostile, toward the Chief Executive's position and policies: not a source of comfort for the US. The end of Marcos likely will increase rather than lessen the turbulence of American-Filipino relations.

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